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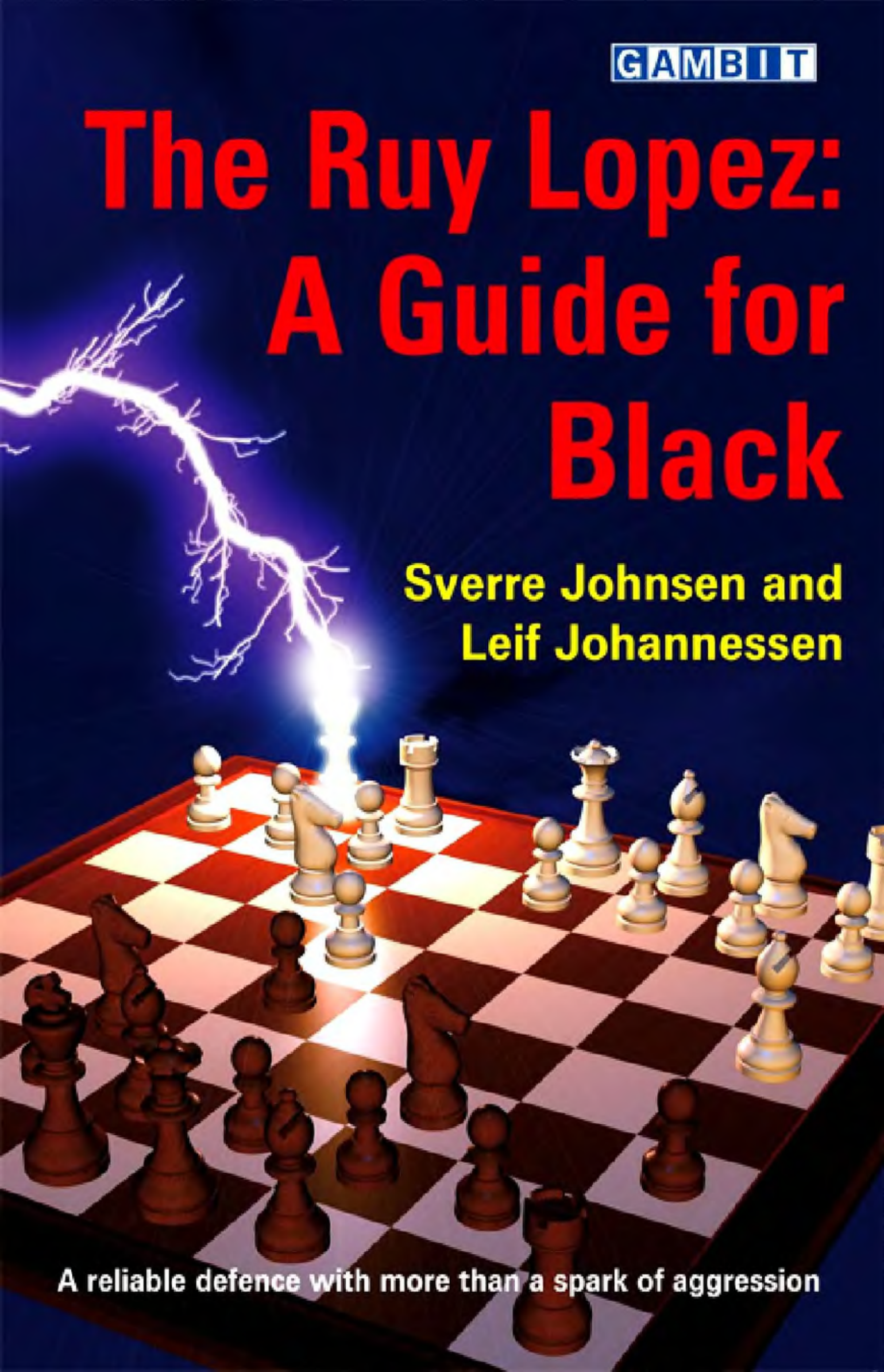
The Ruy Lopez: A Guide for Black

Sverre Johnsen and
Leif Johannessen



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Sverre Johnsen and
Leif Erlend Johannessen

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Symbols

+	check
++	double check
#	checkmate
!!	brilliant move
!	good move
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
?	bad move
??	blunder
+–	White is winning
±	White is much better
⩲	White is slightly better
=	equal position
⩱	Black is slightly better
∓	Black is much better
–+	Black is winning
Ch	championship
Cht	team championship
Wch	world championship
Wcht	world team championship
Ech	European championship
Echt	European team championship
Ct	Candidates event
IZ	interzonal
Z	zonal
ECC	European Clubs Cup
OL	olympiad
jr	junior event
wom	women's event
mem	memorial event
rpd	rapidplay game
tt	team event
1-0	the game ends in a win for White
½-½	the game ends in a draw
0-1	the game ends in a win for Black
(*n*)	*n*th match game
(D)	see next diagram

Bibliography

The *Hitch Hiker's Guide* has already supplanted the great *Encyclopaedia Galactica* as the standard repository of all knowledge and wisdom, for though it has many omissions and contains much that is apocryphal, or at least wildly inaccurate, it scores over the older, more pedestrian work in two important aspects. First, it's slightly cheaper; and secondly it has the words DON'T PANIC inscribed in large friendly letters on its cover.
DOUGLAS ADAMS, *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

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Preface by Sverre

Mistrust is the most necessary characteristic of the chess-player.
SIEGBERT TARRASCH, *The Game of Chess*

This is my second book co-authored with a grandmaster. That obviously is a great honour, but I was less awe-struck on this occasion as my co-author, despite his elevated status, is a considerably younger man than me, and I have known him since he was 6 years old. It would not be right to claim that he was a student of mine, as I cannot remember ever having taught him anything. Moreover, I firmly believe that the main factor in any really strong player's development is his own input. Nevertheless, in an indirect sense, I believe I contributed to his development, as he always was a part of the thriving youth section in my chess club, Oslo Schakselskap, for which I was the chairman.

On this occasion, what really struck me (and my co-author) with awe were the names of the top practitioners: we have been analysing the games of Capablanca, Fischer, Kasparov, Anand, Kramnik, Topalov and almost any other top player you can name. For the authors this is in one respect very reassuring as we can trust that the moves played over the board are generally of a very high quality. Naturally though, any self-respecting modern opening book has to be computer-checked – and what should we conclude when the computer disagrees with the evaluations, or suggests improvements over the games of these giants? This puts quite a burden on the authors, and generally we have been very sceptical about the analysis engines' evaluation abilities, but when backed up by new and interesting moves, we have taken the liberty to point out that there are alternatives available.

Similarly impressive was the sheer number of games played between strong players. In almost any position there were half a dozen different moves played by grandmasters. Even though we generally only examined one or two lines for Black at each turn, we reluctantly had to admit that even the number of options for White under discussion had to be reduced. The only way to do this was to try to identify White's strongest moves, the most popular ones, and those that contained noteworthy strategic ideas. If an option for White didn't qualify for one of these categories, it was generally left out – even if it had been tested by top grandmasters. In these cases we rely on the fact that the current text should give the reader a firm grounding in general Ruy Lopez concepts and enable him to find a good response to less critical moves over the board.

We assume that potential buyers are not too eager to part with their hard-earned money for a book mainly written by a keen amateur. So, here is a specification of the work distribution: as for my previous book (*Win with the London System*) I am the main author in the traditional sense and again my GM co-author has been the primary analyst. However, not only has Leif written quite a lot of the prose, but he has also had his own ideas from the start about what the final product should be like.

After agreeing on the scope for the book, our cooperation very basically ran like this: I collected the relevant material I could find, organized it in Word and ChessBase files, assisted by an analysis engine, and handed it over to Leif. He then reviewed it for a couple of months, mainly by updating the ChessBase files but also by adjusting the verbal comments and asking me to reorganize a few chapters. I then got the analysis and manuscript back for a major update before Gambit Publications took over. This is a bit oversimplified; in reality most of the chapters went back and forth several times.

There were two main exceptions to this scheme. First there were the main lines of the Zaitsev Variation (Lines 1A, 1B and 1C). After considerable struggling, I finally had to admit that I was not

able to make sense of the available material. The root of the problems was the material imbalance, which made reliable assessments very difficult without a grandmasterly understanding of the positions. So in full understanding with Leif, I simply handed him the rather chaotic ChessBase files I had collected and left it to him to sort it out. I believe he did a great job. At least it all seemed a lot clearer to me when I received the reorganized files.

The second major exception was the line 9 d4 ♗g4 10 d5, where I thought I had done some very decent workmanship on the line 10...♘a5 11 ♗c2 ♕c8 – mainly updating and expanding somewhat upon Davies's analysis in his book *Play 1 e4 e5!*. The only problem was that there had turned up a new game casting some doubts on the validity of 11...♕c8. So rather than asking me to rewrite the entire chapter, he did the job himself, presenting me with a completely new section, based on 11...c6 instead.

Finally I have to thank Øystein Brekke at Sjakkbutikken, who went far beyond his professional duties in order to get hold of any relevant information we requested, and my wife Orada and my son Jonatan for their patience while I worked on this book project.

Preface by Leif

Chess is only a game and not to be classed with business, science, technology, not to speak of religion, philosophy or the arts. No one desires to see players devote to chess such time as they need for serious purposes.
EMANUEL LASKER

When my club mate Sverre Johnsen asked me in October 2005 whether I was planning to add the Closed Ruy Lopez to my repertoire, I was slightly surprised. I had planned to do so for some time, but had put it off due to exams and other commitments, and didn't remember telling anybody about this plan. It quickly transpired that he wasn't trying to impress me with his newly found mind-reading abilities but rather looking for a co-author for a book. It didn't take me long to accept his offer, as I thought this project would be a useful experience for me and I could also hope to benefit from it strictly chess wise.

The old – and successful – Soviet school of chess knew how to develop chess talent. They advised all aspiring chess-players early in their careers to play the Ruy Lopez with both colours as they would then be exposed to almost every kind of position – closed, semi-closed and open and with all kind of pawn-formations. In his monumental work on his predecessors, Kasparov also likes to stress this point. In the fifth book he quotes Capablanca, who said that the Ruy Lopez is the touchstone of understanding positional play. I hope it is not too late for me to benefit from its magic. Even though I am a GM, a few hundred extra rating points would be very welcome.

Some conventional wisdom says that you can trust a GM writing an opening book only if he has decided to give up that particular opening (which is not in itself a great recommendation). In this case I am not giving up an old and tested weapon. On the contrary I am preparing an addition to my repertoire. The downside is that my practical experience with the lines we consider is fairly limited, but I hope that the positive factors will more than outweigh this. Being new to the opening, I don't take basic concepts for granted and frequently stop and ask myself why a particular move has become the main line when there seem to be a lot of valid alternatives.

In order to use my lack of experience with the Ruy Lopez in a constructive way, I would like to share with the readers how I prepared the opening while writing this book. The process was quite similar to what I would have done if I were to prepare the Closed Ruy Lopez only for myself. I have tried to organize the work I did in distinct steps. I hope this will make the process easier to grasp even though it was in reality a little less orderly, with some of the steps being repeated or overlapping to a great extent.

Step 0: Prior Knowledge

I am not a full-time chess professional. Consequently my approach to opening study should be possible to emulate for an enthusiastic amateur – at least when it comes to some specific lines. Nevertheless I may have one advantage over the average amateur: over the years I have acquired a relatively broad chess knowledge, mainly by keenly following top-level chess. Whether you study the classics by Capablanca, Alekhine, Geller, Keres and Fischer or more recent games by Karpov, Kasparov, Anand, Kramnik and Topalov, you can hardly avoid being exposed to a heavy dose of Closed Ruy Lopez duels. So, even if I didn't really study the games with a view to adopting the opening myself, I knew quite a bit of the ideas and basic theory before I started a systematic study of the opening.

It is hard to say exactly how useful such general knowledge is, but I have no doubt that having seen loads of typical positions before will help you learn a new opening. It also facilitates

the task of remembering all the lines. It is common knowledge that this is how our memory works: when we receive new information, we immediately compare and relate it to information we already have. If you hear a random number and have nothing to latch it on to, you will forget it very quickly. You need an association. The same goes for ideas and moves in chess: they are easier to remember if you have already seen similar patterns before and can categorize them – consciously or sub-consciously – under that label. This way they immediately become an inherent part of your long-term memory, rather than being (temporarily) stored in the much less reliable short-term memory. When I studied the variations of Line 6A, I was helped by my (admittedly limited) knowledge of the Open Ruy Lopez strategy, which, to some extent, made me able to compare the two opening systems. I was also pleased to be reminded of the following classic, which I believe deepened my understanding of the principal positions:

Alekhine – Rubinstein
Vilna 1912

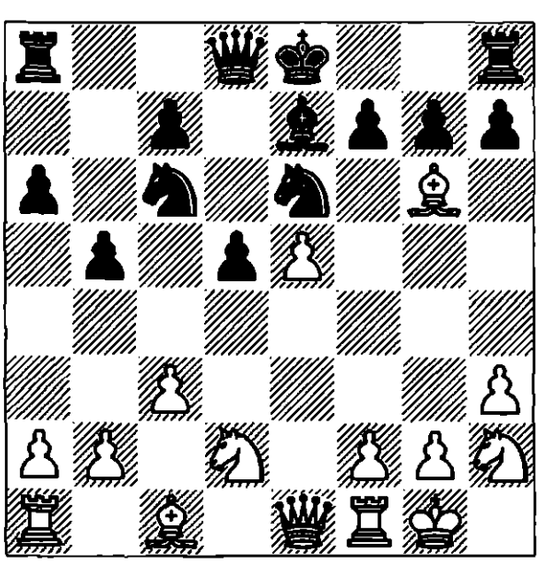
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4

This is the Open Variation.

6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 c3 ♗e7 10 ♘bd2 ♘c5 11 ♗c2 ♗g4 12 h3?!

This is a questionable decision, as it simply chases the black bishop to its ideal square on g6.

12...♗h5 13 ♕e1 ♘e6 14 ♘h2 ♗g6 15 ♗xg6 *(D)*



15...fxg6!!

This goes against most chess-players' instincts – and was revolutionary at the time. Here is what Kasparov has to say about the move: "But this is a surprise: in such cases every follower of the Steinitz School would without thinking have captured towards the centre (...hxg6), whereas Akiba evaluated the position concretely. A phenomenal move (...). Of course, today this is already a typical procedure, but then ... how hard was it to go against the established dogmas!"

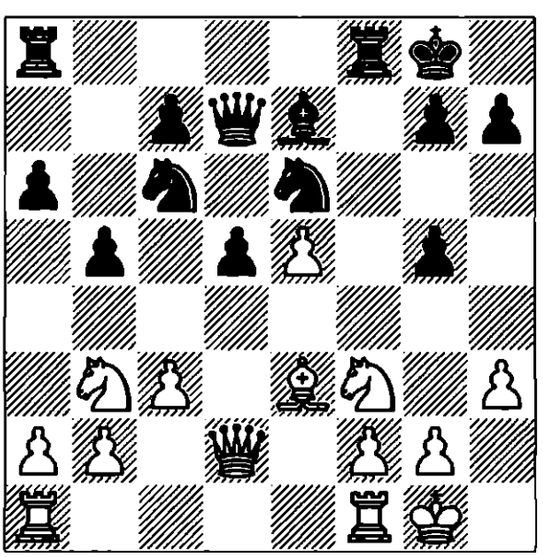
16 ♘b3 g5! 17 ♗e3 0-0 18 ♘f3?

A poor move by the 20-year-old Alekhine, after which the exchange sacrifice on f3 will decide matters.

18...♕d7?!

There is really no need to prepare the sacrifice. As Kasparov points out, the immediate 18...♖xf3! was decisive.

19 ♕d2 *(D)*



19...♖xf3!

Better late than never! This sacrifice is obvious to modern eyes but one should remember that this game was played at a time when most masters were more reluctant to sacrifice the exchange than they are today. Actually even some of the top players seemed to think like many club players do today: never give up material unless you are sure to regain it quickly or force a mate.

20 gxf3 ♘xe5 21 ♕e2 ♖f8 22 ♘d2 ♘g6! 23 ♖fe1 ♗d6 24 f4 ♘exf4 25 ♕f1 ♘xh3+ 26 ♔h1 g4 27 ♕e2 ♕f5 0-1

To conclude: if the Ruy Lopez is completely unknown to you, you probably will have to

work a bit harder to absorb the basic theory than I did. The bright side is that you will correspondingly gain more in chess understanding and playing strength.

Step 1: Considering the Options

Even after you have decided to study a certain opening, there are quite a few decisions to be made. You will still have to decide which variations to play. This particularly applies for the enormous Ruy Lopez complex, with all its interweaving branches.

In order to be properly prepared, you need to know one, or ideally two, lines better than most opponents. Objectively there is no great risk in picking two random Ruy Lopez lines that are played at grandmaster level. The chances that they will be fully playable for the rest of your life are excellent. However, that is not how most players choose their lines. Most feel that they need to find lines that they have some affinity with. That makes a lot of sense – only if you really identify with your lines, will you be willing to put the necessary dedication into your work. So in order to make a good choice, you need a general overview.

The considerations when selecting a good repertoire for your own practical play and those when selecting the lines for a book are not too different. In both cases you basically want a couple of quality lines that fit well together. Defining 'fitting together' is not so easy, but generally it means either that they are similar enough to save you some time when preparing, or that they complement each other because they are appropriate choices under different tournament conditions (usually this will mean one sharp and one solid line).

In this case we wanted to examine at least one of the major lines, which in practice meant either the Breyer, the Chigorin, or the Zaitsev Variation. At this early stage, I was in favour of the Breyer, with which I already had some experience and which has always appealed to me because of the harmonious arrangement of the black forces. When I understood that my co-author had principled reservations against this defence ("I prefer to develop rather than undevelop!"), I was slightly sceptical about his favoured Zaitsev. Frankly I was uncertain about the theoretical status of the main lines in this variation. Only a few months earlier I had witnessed the following slaughter first-hand, while playing on 2nd board behind Hjartarson in the Icelandic Team Championship:

Stefansson – Hjartarson
Icelandic Cht 2005

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 h6 13 ♗c2 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 ♘d7 17 ♖a3 f5 18 ♘h2 ♘f6 19 ♖g3 ♔h8?!

In Line 1B we recommend 19...♕e7.

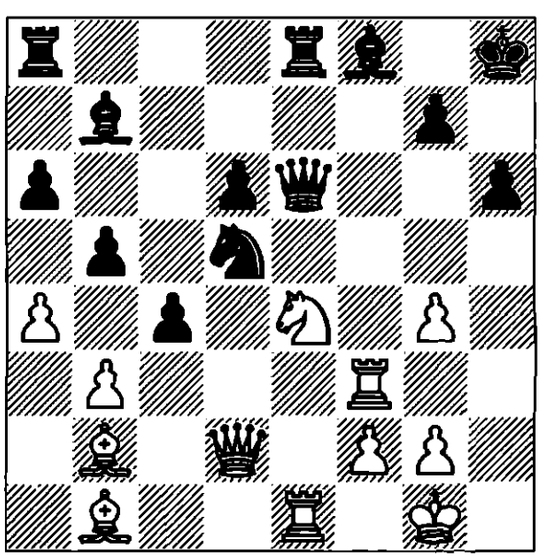
20 b3 ♕d7

No better is 20...fxe4 21 ♘xe4 ♗xd5 22 ♘xf6 ♕xf6 23 ♗d2!, when transferring the bishop to the long diagonal gave White a strong attack in Topalov-Almasi, Monaco (Amber blindfold) 2001.

21 ♗b2 ♕f7 22 ♖f3 fxe4 23 ♘xe4 ♘bxd5 24 ♘g4 ♕e6 25 ♕d2

White's attack is already decisive.

25...♘xg4 26 hxg4 c4 *(D)*



Now White finished with a tactical shot:

27 ♖xf8+! ♖xf8 28 ♘g3

The black queen is under attack, but Black has to protect h6 as well. Note White's bishops here, which are of formidable strength. In short, Black is lost. He tried to fight on by giving up a knight, but the game is already decided:

28...♘e3 29 ♖xe3 ♕d5 30 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 31 ♘f5

At this point Black could just as well have resigned. What really worried me was with what

ease Stefansson had won the game. He played practically *a tempo* the whole game, while Hjartarson was in time-trouble around move 25 or thereabout. And this was one of my old heroes playing Black!

When after some hesitation I agreed to start working on a manuscript with the Zaitsev as the principal variation, I made it clear that this was a tentative choice which might be reversed if there turned out to be serious theoretical obstacles. Fortunately, our first investigations indicated that from a purely theoretical point of view Black was doing quite well, so the cornerstone of the repertoire seemed to be firmly in place.

Step 2: Picking a Minor Line

I am generally no big fan of offbeat lines, but when you take up a completely new opening (like 1...e5), there are several reasons to adopt a relatively minor line at first. Not only is there generally less theory to learn than in the main lines, but there is also a better chance of catching your opponent unprepared. So for the first game or two with a new opening – until the main lines have been carefully prepared – a slightly unusual line can be very useful. Then it should probably be put on the shelf and only employed again when it can be assumed to have regained its surprise value.

Basically this is what I did some years ago when I adopted two early deviations, namely the Berlin Defence (3...♘f6) and the Norwegian Variation (3...a6 4 ♗a4 b5 5 ♗b3 ♘a5), the latter being obligatory for every new Norwegian GM (but unfortunately not very good for Black!). The common denominator for these lines is that Black immediately steers the play into his preferred variation, avoiding not only the main lines, but also most of White's early deviations. This was a very practical decision at the time as it left me time also to prepare for quite a few non-Ruy Lopez lines. The downside was that apart from forcing me to work out a rudimentary repertoire against the Exchange Variation, they added relatively little to my theoretical knowledge about the Ruy Lopez.

When we decided to follow the main lines quite a few more moves before deviating from the main path, it was mainly because we felt that the Zaitsev needed to be backed up by a way to avoid the repetition starting with 11 ♘g5. What we were looking for was a minor line, easy to learn but still sound. By this decision the 'intermediate' Karpov (9...♘d7) and Smyslov (9...h6) variations were more or less excluded from the start, as they have accumulated a considerable body of theory but are still not in the same league as the three big systems.

That left us with the (more or less nameless) lines 9...♗e6, 9...a5 and 9...♕d7 to consider. The big question was whether we could recommend any of them with a clear conscience – obviously they are 'minor lines' for a reason.

Our initial inclination was to investigate 9...♗e6, as it leads to distinctive positions and has been played by quite strong masters. Unfortunately, a closer look made us more sceptical about its objective merits. Obviously we would have to identify some improvements for Black if we were to recommend it as anything more than a pure surprise weapon.

Normally our next step would have been to put the 9...a5 variation under the microscope, but at this point we had already started working on the Zaitsev and noticed how often ...♕d7 turned up as an 'interesting sideline'. It didn't take long to realize that 9...♕d7 could be the perfect partner for the Zaitsev if we could only repair its theoretical status (or rather non-existent status). We believe we succeeded, but to judge for yourself you must take a look at Chapter 5.

Step 3: Preparing to Prepare

Before I start any systematic study of the actual theory of a line, I like to cruise the terrain to acquaint myself with the options available. For this purpose, the Opening Book function in ChessBase 9 is a useful tool, where with one mouse-click you can get a complete statistical overview of a move. This is my favourite stage in the preparation phase (and occasionally the final one!).

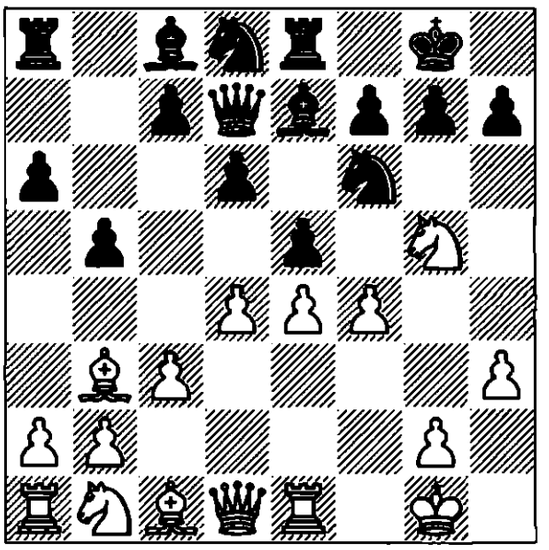
At this stage I also like to play through a few well-annotated games just to get a better general feeling for what's going on. I prefer verbal annotation rather than a lot of lines and symbols. And although I normally look for games with the exact line that interests me, in the Ruy

Lopez this is not as important, since many of the typical middlegame positions are very similar in character.

Another thing I like to do at this stage is to test out the lines in some blitz games on ICC or preferably in my club. The advantage of playing over the board – besides the sociable factor – is that this is closer to a tournament situation. A very strong, semi-retired GM colleague of mine complained during last year's Norwegian Team Championship that he could hardly play chess any more without a mouse in his right hand! But seriously, having your opponent on the other side of the board, where you can sense his emotions and reactions during the whole game, is an obvious advantage to the rather dry ICC. The advantage of the latter, however, is that you have the chance to play some really strong grandmasters and test your ideas on the highest level.

In the earliest phase of my preparation I was mainly testing the 9...♕d7 variation – simply to establish whether this was a viable approach. I must admit that at first I occasionally felt a little embarrassed to play it. The embarrassment subsided a little as I started to pick up some points, but I suppose 9...♕d7 is a move that will always feel a little awkward to execute. The reaction of my normally stoic team-mate in the German Bundesliga, GM Florian Handke (we're playing for Wattenscheid), is typical. After a few beers and some blitz games in this line, where his score with White was rather bleak, he exclaimed: "Is there any point at all with this queen move?!" In Chapter 5 we try to convince the reader that there is!

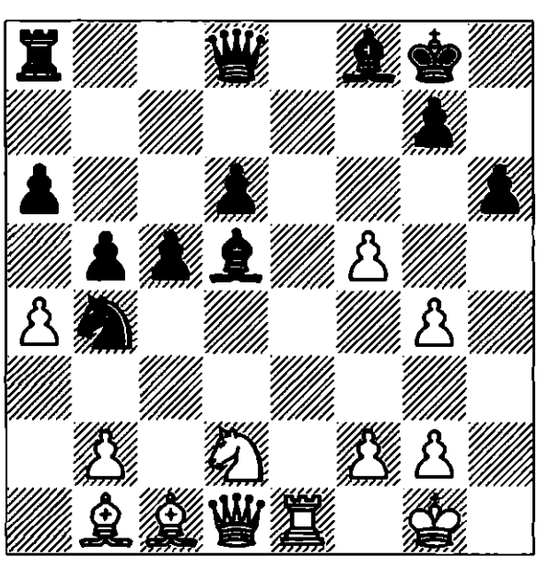
After an interesting blitz game I will occasionally look in a theoretical manual to find out what was going on, but this is not really what I am concerned about at this point. However, after two humiliating losses in an informal match against Atle Grønn (a rather strong 2400 player) in my chess club, in the variation 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘g5 ♘d8 12 f4 *(D)*, I was happy to see my co-author strolling over with a printout of our analysis.


B

He intervened just in time to stop me from repeating the 12...exf4 of my previous games. Instead Malevinsky's 12...♗b7 puts White in something resembling a 'zugzwang-lite' and I confidently scored my first win with Black in the match. For the details on this, see Line 5E. Not strictly by the rulebook perhaps, but acceptable in a friendly setting!

Step 4: Identifying Critical Positions

Having played some dozens of blitz games against qualified opposition, I usually have a better idea what are the critical lines and positions. I quickly identified a couple of positions that I had to examine closely, simply to make sure that the variations I considered adopting were viable. First of all a position from the Zaitsev: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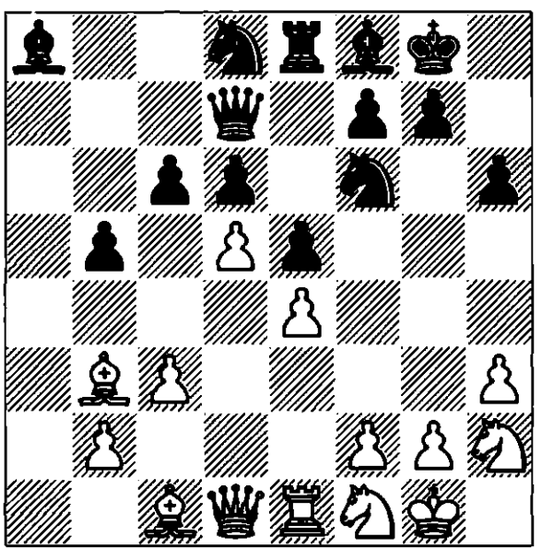
It seemed that in all other major Zaitsev lines, Black was doing fine. So if we could only make this position work for Black, we would be well on our way to having a repertoire in place. I was a bit sceptical at first: White has easy moves at his disposal, like ♘e4 followed by g5 and it seems that Black's defensive task is a formidable one. Then my co-author pointed out a

few recent correspondence games played at the highest level, where Black defended this position with surprising ease. This was definitely one of the brighter moments during our work.

The critical position in the 9...♕d7 system occurs considerably earlier in the game and is almost untested. Still, this position may be critical for the entire evaluation of the 9...♕d7 variation:

W



In Line 5A we share with the reader our independent analysis of this position, as there is a remarkable lack of practical examples here. Obviously, a major positional factor is whether Black can successfully reintroduce the d8-knight into the game.

Step 5: Looking for Heroes

This is a rather minor step, and possibly not a strictly necessary one. However, whenever I take up a new line (or an opening system), I try to establish who the heroes are. That is: to whose games should you pay particular attention? Who will save the line if a problem occurs?

This is not quite as simple as looking up the line in a database and finding out who are the strongest players employing it. With the arrival of enormous databases and powerful analysis engines, few GMs are willing to be sitting ducks, playing the same variation throughout their entire career. The typical modern GM doesn't only vary between a handful of opening systems, he constantly replaces the most vulnerable of these with new systems.

Moreover, few contemporary top-level players are willing to fight for their darlings. The modern, pragmatic approach seems to be to abandon a line as soon as a theoretical obstacle turns up and switch to an alternative line while waiting for somebody else to repair it. And nowhere is that approach more comfortable than within the Closed Ruy Lopez complex.

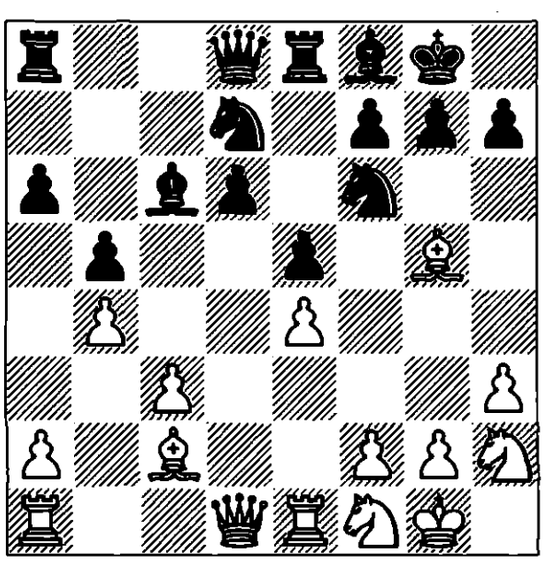
The early heroes of the Zaitsev Variation (besides the eponymous master himself) were Karpov, Gligorić and Geller. Their games are indeed worth studying – in particular if you can find some with good verbal annotations. However, for various reasons, these early musketeers are not contributing much to the Zaitsev's development any more.

Quickly my eyes fell on Bacrot's games. He is a world-class player and a young man who is likely to play top-level chess for a few more decades. He has been playing 1...e5 and the Zaitsev during his entire professional career – and with success! And even more important: he seems to be willing to put in the necessary work to remain faithful to the opening. Here is an example where he first suffered in a topical line, but then put in the effort to rehabilitate it for Black. Incidentally, this is the line Khalifman advocates for White in his popular book *Opening for White according to Anand volume 2*:

Z. Almasi – Bacrot
Szeged (2) 2000

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 d5 ♘b8 13 ♘f1 ♘bd7 14 ♘3h2 ♘c5 15 ♗c2 c6 16 b4 ♘cd7 17 dxc6 ♗xc6 18 ♗g5 *(D)*

B



18...♕c8?! 19 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 20 ♘g4 ♘xg4 21 hxg4 ♗d7 22 ♘e3 ♕xc3 23 ♘d5 ♕c6 24 ♗b3

White has tremendous compensation for the pawn.

24...♕b7 25 g5 ♗e6 26 ♖e3 ♖ec8 27 ♕h5 ♖c4 28 ♗xc4 bxc4 29 ♖d1 ♖c8 30 a3 ♖c6 31 ♖c3 ♕c8 32 ♖dc1 ♗g4 33 ♕h4 ♗e6 34 ♕g3 1-0

As we describe in Line 3A, Bacrot later rehabilitated the line with 18...h6 19 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 20 ♘g4 ♘xg4 21 ♕xg4 and now his patent plan 21...♗d7!, transferring the bishop to the a2-g8 diagonal to oppose the white bishop and at the same time evacuating the c-file for an attack on the backward c3-pawn. So far the Frenchman has scored 2 out of 3 with Black against Naiditsch, Leko and Külaots. Bacrot's efforts have practically put this line out of business.

Although Bacrot has lately jumped on the Marshall wagon, together with almost the entire chess elite, and also occasionally plays the Berlin, he hasn't abandoned the Zaitsev and is definitely still a man to watch for players who are considering adding this opening to their repertoire.

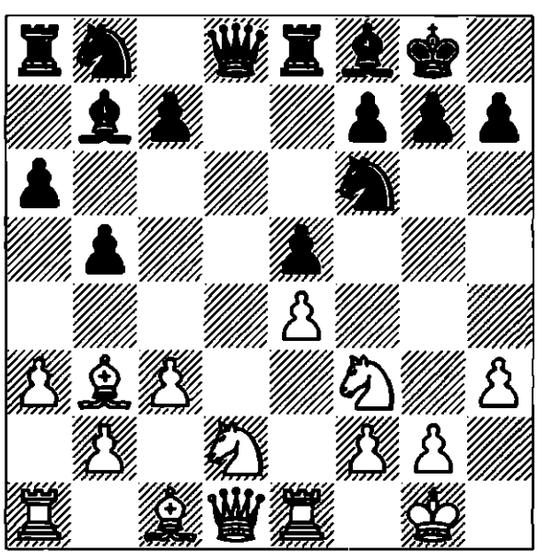
Step 6: Facing Quiet Lines

Some lines demand exact knowledge, others demand ideas. As Nunn has pointed out, in sharp lines you will often score very well immediately after you have studied them – simply because the variations are fresh in your mind. Strategic openings are another matter – you should allow for some time to figure out the positional intricacies by practical play (quite possibly you will learn just as much from the post-mortems as the actual games). In your first outings you could therefore suffer from lack of experience and an undeveloped feeling for where the pieces belong.

The Closed Ruy Lopez contains both kinds of lines. While the razor-sharp lines will naturally occupy most of your time in your early preparation (as one mistake might cost you the game), the quieter lines with slow manoeuvring play may actually be a tougher challenge in a practical game. Here you have to demonstrate positional understanding and display patience. If you know how to improve your position if your opponent does nothing (or very little), then you probably understand something about the underlying dynamics of the opening.

My natural instinct when facing a quiet move was to consider the Breyer regrouping (see 'Broaden Your Horizon' in the Introduction). Generally that works quite well, as Black's position is very harmonious once his knight reappears on d7, but you obviously have to show some care. Fortunately I noticed the following before I had the chance to employ the line with Black:

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a3 ♘b8? 13 dxe5! dxe5 *(D)*



14 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 15 ♕b3+ ♔e7 16 ♘xe5

According to most books, Black is doomed here.

Just how fully I have absorbed the subtleties of the Closed Ruy Lopez remains to be seen. I freely admit that I expect to learn more in the future! Before my game with Black against Nigel Short in the 2006 Olympiad in Turin, I was considering playing the Ruy, but I thought it likely that he would play a quiet system, and even though I had spent lots of hours studying such positions, I was not confident in my own abilities in a slow manoeuvring game versus one of the greatest authorities on the white side of this opening. My practical experience with the Ruy was at that point rather limited. As it turned out, I chose the Caro-Kann and suffered a painful defeat, so in retrospect I might as well have played 1...e5 and had a free lesson...

Step 7: Detailed Preparation

Certain variations demand precise knowledge of moves and move-orders simply because they lead to positions of a very concrete and demanding type. If you are a genuinely strong player, you might be able to work things out over the board, but you will pay a heavy price time-wise and you will be at a considerable disadvantage compared to your opponent who can play like a grandmaster simply by relying on his memory.

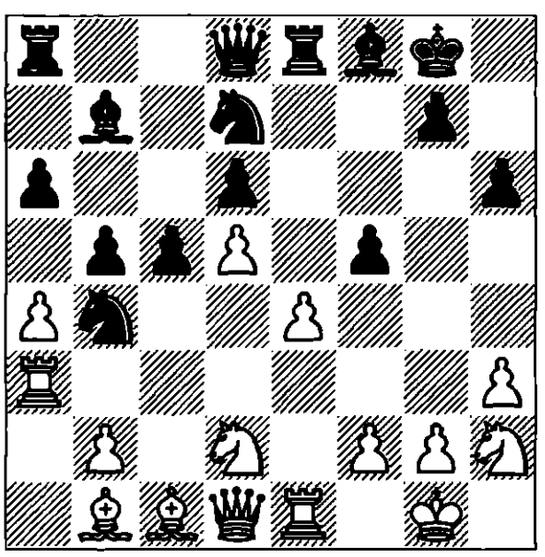
Whenever I start serious work on a new opening I like to start out with a good book. While I realize that this may reflect my personality more than anything else, by 'a good book' I don't mean *Informator*. Rather than pages of variations that end with ± or ∓, I prefer words that explain the basic ideas of the opening – a book you can read on the couch, on the beach or in a café, without having to set up board and pieces. For this purpose, I have good recollections of *Mastering the Spanish* by King and Ponzetto, which was the first book to reveal to me some of the secrets of the Ruy Lopez. Unfortunately I have lost it, but I seem to remember that the chapters are organized by central pawn-formations rather than the different lines (Chigorin, Zaitsev, Breyer, etc.), and, without ending up in abstractions or generalities, the authors emphasize plans and typical procedures rather than long lines. For starting out as a Ruy Lopez player, this is the perfect introduction. The fact that it is now more than 10 years old is of less importance. Naturally the Marshall lines are out of date, but in many of the quiet middlegame positions the evaluations and the standard methods of handling them haven't changed at all.

Of course, in 2006, we cannot ignore the computer's influence in the preparation of a new opening system. Every modern GM spends most of his training time sitting in front of the laptop. And I'm not only speaking about database programs – such as ChessBase – where you can flick through hundreds of games in a few minutes and gain experience and a feeling for the position (although a rather superficial one) almost instantly, but also the various analysis engines that are available now. To have Shredder, Hiarcs or Rybka running in the background while analysing a game or a position is almost as natural for the modern GM as switching on the computer! (Incidentally, for this book we mainly used Fritz 9 and Junior 9 in our analysis.) These powerful engines' fresh look at any position, not burdened by dogmas and prejudices from the past, can sometimes cause entire opening systems to be re-evaluated. The main lines of the Zaitsev could well be an illustrative example here, where the computers might change earlier opinions.

Let's take a look at the position after these well-known moves:

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 h6 13 ♗c2 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 ♘d7 17 ♖a3 f5 18 ♘h2 *(D)*

B



For most of the 1990s, these positions were regarded as very dangerous for Black. White's potential attack does indeed look lethal: the a3-rook will swing over to the kingside and the b1-bishop is just waiting for the long diagonal to be opened. The computers are not scared, however, and can't really see the white attack at all. Ivanchuk happily went for this position against Anand and here he came up with a novelty. Ivanchuk's move is in fact the no. 2 candidate among most computers we have consulted:

Anand – Ivanchuk
Turin OL 2006

18...♕e7!?

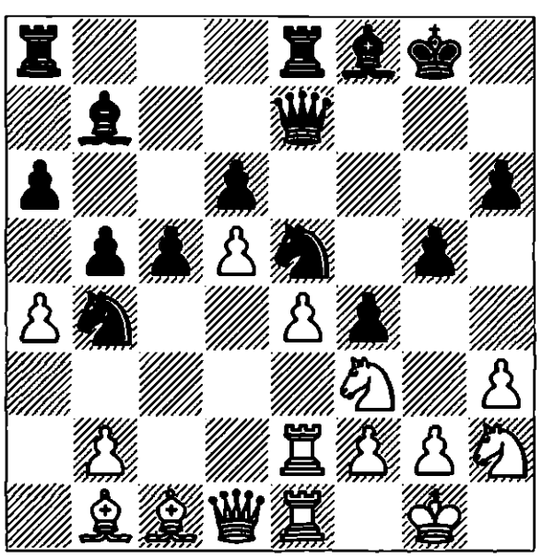
In Chapter 1 we mainly analyse the traditional choice, namely 18...♘f6. The computer's

first choice is 18...fxe4?, which is probably too much. Admittedly it wins a pawn, but at the same time it unleashes the energy of almost all the white pieces. This shows that one has to apply common sense as well when analysing with the silicon monsters, not trusting them blindly. The queen move is annoying for White, as the pin down the e-file restricts his mobility.

19 ♖ae3

We won't delve into the lines too deeply, as that is outside the scope of our investigation. However, Ivanchuk's novelty is certainly interesting. Neither 19 ♘df3 ♕f7! nor 19 ♖f3 ♗xd5 20 ♖xf5 ♗e6 21 ♖f3 ♘e5 22 ♖g3 c4 looks impressive for White. In the game Black was comfortable:

19...f4 20 ♖3e2 ♘e5 21 ♘df3 g5 *(D)*



Compare this with the note to Black's 18th in Line 1D, where we conclude that Black should be fine.

22 ♘xe5 dxe5 23 ♗d2 ♗c8 24 axb5 axb5 25 ♗xb4 cxb4 26 ♗d3 ♗d7 27 ♖d2 ♕d6 28 ♗e2 ♖e7 29 ♗g4 ♗e8 30 ♗h5 ♗d7 31 ♕f3 ♖c8 32 ♖a1 ♖c4 33 ♘g4 ♔g7 34 ♔h2 ♗c8 35 ♕e2 b3 36 ♖a3 ♖ec7 37 ♖a1 ♗d7 38 ♕f3 ♖c2 39 ♖ad1 ♖7c4 40 ♖e2 ♖xe2 41 ♕xe2 ♖c2 42 ♕f3 ♖xb2 43 ♕c3 ♗xg4 44 ♗xg4 ♖xf2 45 ♕xb3 ♕b4 46 ♕xb4 ♗xb4 47 d6 ♖d2 48 ♖xd2 ♗xd2 49 ♗e2 ½-½

Step 8: Testing

With the variations finally in place, it is time for a new session of practical testing – again mainly in blitz games, but also in unrated rapid games if an opportunity presents itself. This time I ask myself some quite specific questions:

- Do I remember my analysis?
- Do I enjoy the positions I get?
- Which positions do I need to study more closely?
- What have my opponents prepared?
- What am I likely to encounter in a serious tournament game?

You might think that these questions could as well be answered by careful analysis and common sense. You may be right, but I feel that this testing helps to bridge the gap between theory and praxis.

So what did I learn? Nothing sensational maybe and most of it was of a nature that will have little interest for anyone other than me. Two things caught my attention, though: firstly, strong players were much more likely to go for the main-line Ruy Lopez. They played their first 9 moves instantly and only then started to think. Weaker players had a tendency to deviate earlier, either with the Exchange Variation or avoiding the Ruy altogether, preferring the Scotch or the Italian Game. The reason for this might be a strictly pragmatic one: professional players have more time to prepare, while for the amateur the amount of theory in the Ruy Lopez complex can seem intimidating.

Although in our book we are not primarily seeking to advise white players, we must say that we don't recommend such an approach. When playing White in the Ruy Lopez, you know you are playing sound chess and you have a small, healthy advantage. It's not like the Najdorf, where one small inaccuracy can cause your downfall. White has a long-term initiative and normally you can find good moves by logical reasoning. We therefore recommend the readers to start playing the main lines.

Secondly, I was slightly disappointed to see that I very rarely got the fascinating positions I had analysed so deeply from Chapter 1. GMs tended to play quiet systems instead, with an early a3 or ♗c2, preferring a slow manoeuvring game. This way they avoid unpleasant surprises such as Ivanchuk's 18...♕e7!?. In *New In Chess* 8/2005, GM Peter Heine Nielsen elaborates on this in his comments to the famous game Anand-Adams, San Luis Wch 2005 (which

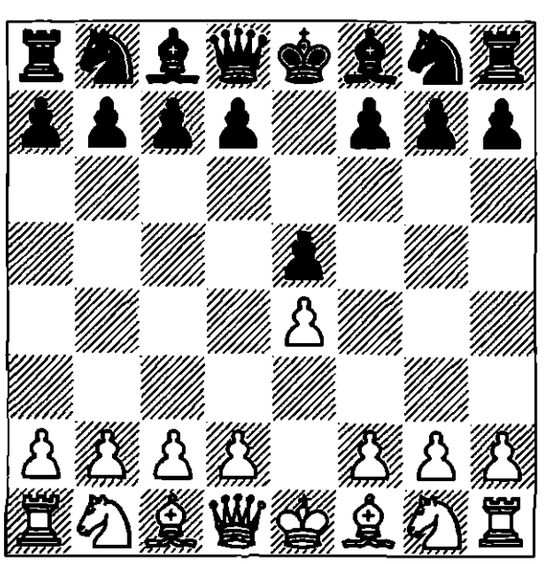
we analyse in Line 2A). He says that these days the Zaitsev is not as popular any more, so when a GM faces it, he doesn't trust his memory in the most complicated lines and chooses a safe approach instead. If he does indeed remember his analysis, he might fear that it is old and out of date, and he deviates again. This gave me the urge to prepare properly for the quiet systems: if White doesn't have the guts to go for the most critical positions, no way I will go down in a harmless line; he should be have to pay for his cowardice!

Step 9: Completing the Repertoire

The Ruy Lopez is a major opening and at grandmaster level it is the main part of a repertoire against 1 e4. However, by itself, it doesn't constitute a complete repertoire. White has various alternatives at his disposal on the second and third moves, and at club level they may even compete with the Ruy Lopez in popularity.

For the last four years I have from time to time met 1 e4 with 1...e5 – usually planning to meet the Ruy with the Berlin Defence. That does not mean I am a seasoned 1 e4 e5 player, as it had only been my third or fourth choice (after 1...c5 and 1...e6 and competing with 1...c6), but it means that before I started this book project I already had some ideas about how to meet White's second- and third-move alternatives.

When I first prepared 1...e5 *(D)* (back in 2002), I consulted John Emms's excellent book *Play the Open Games*. This book has only one flaw – it is far too complete!


W

This is a normal chess position where the basic rules for good chess apply. Actually it is *the* classical battleground where the old masters' advice about rapid development, quick castling, knights before bishops and leaving the rook's pawns alone still reigns supreme. Good moves correlate with these principles; bad moves ignore them or even impede them. Or even more concretely: in this position, 2 ♘f3 is undoubtedly White's best move. Other moves can hardly cause Black any problems (but you should nevertheless have some idea about how to meet 2 f4!).

I don't know if it disappoints you or delights you, but I can assure you that an average GM does not have a prepared reply to 2 ♗b5 or 2 ♕h5, although GM Nakamura has done his best to popularize the latter (baptized the 'Boris Becker Attack' by Kasparov in *New In Chess* 7/2005 because of the exhibition game Becker-Kasparov on CNN in 2000). In addition to the ones mentioned above, Emms analyses such moves as 2 ♘e2, 2 c4 and 2 a3. Actually I suspect that preparing against such moves could even be harmful on your way to your goal. Not only would it be a waste of time that could have been spent on a principled system, but it would also indicate a lack of faith in your own skills. Weak or indifferent moves, in the opening as in any other phase of the game, should be met by serious and critical thinking during the game.

So what did I prepare? Not so much really:

- Some lines in the Scotch.
- The Closed Italian (which, incidentally, can transpose to the Pilnik Variation in some of the main lines).
- A line in the Two Knights Defence.
- A few main lines in the King's Gambit.
- Some short lines to defuse the Bishop's Opening and the Vienna Game.

I am well aware that at some point I will have to pay a price for this. However, I hope it will only be in time on my clock and possibly some sweat – not in points on the tournament table.

Step 10: Preparing for an Opponent

When I begin to feel fairly well prepared theoretically, I can finally consider employing my new opening in a tournament game. This is where a different kind of preparation begins –

the database preparation for a specific opponent. No matter how well prepared you are in general, in current tournament chess you will always check your opponent's ChessBase dossier before a game. Usually this will predict with some degree of accuracy in which opening or variation the clash will take place. There is, of course, no guarantee that your opponent has not changed his opening preferences recently or will have prepared something special for you. However, if he has, you can at least assume that his practical experience with it will be rather limited.

This preparation could take anything from a few days to a few minutes, depending on several factors, such as the tournament format, the importance of the game and the amount of information available. Perhaps the most decisive factor is your own personality and your scientific inclination. I remember the playoff for the 2005 Norwegian Championship, between Magnus Carlsen and Simen Agdestein, for which I was commentating live. The match had been scheduled almost half a year earlier and the two combatants had months to prepare for each other. However, interviews after the match revealed that both players had waited until the night before the first game with their preparation.

When preparing for a specific opponent, the decision process will usually be a little different from the impersonal logic you applied when first selecting your opening repertoire; intuition, hopes, fears – they may all be part of your reasoning. So rather than looking for improvements around the 28th move, you end up looking for a way to take the fight to a position where you feel that you can make the most of your strengths and neutralize your opponent's. The process and your final decision will also be influenced by the fact that your opponent has access to your games too, and likewise is looking for your weak points.

Somewhat surprisingly, this was a step where the writing of this book made a considerable impact. I suddenly realized that I would only get the chance to play a very few games with the Ruy Lopez before the book was published. Losing my first game with the opening would be a very bad idea! And, suddenly, rather than looking for the ideal opening variation to employ against my next opponent, I found that I was looking for the ideal opponent for a Closed Ruy Lopez duel.

Before I noticed, the Chess Olympiad in Turin had passed without a single 'perfect' occasion for my first Zaitsev game. Basically the same happened in my next tournament, the 'Midnight Sun Chess Challenge' in Tromsø – with the main difference being that I faced 1 e4 in only one single game.

Then, just after an extended deadline for our manuscript, a near perfect opportunity presented itself in the Norwegian Championship. I was to play Black against former Norwegian junior champion Stig Gabrielsen. In this case the preparation stage was fairly straightforward: Stig is a dedicated 1 e4 player and more and more a main-line man. I guessed I would have to avoid the 'Zaitsev repetition' and simply spent most of my time looking over the 9...♕d7 lines.

Step 11: Tournament Practice

Gabrielsen – L.E. Johannessen
Norwegian Ch (Moss) 2006

My opponent is an FM, rated around 2350, and is rather dangerous: a few rounds later he was completely winning with Black versus Simen Agdestein, but time-trouble took its toll and he agreed to a draw with the flag hanging.

1 e4 e5

With only 50% after the first four rounds, I would normally have been inclined to sharpen the game with a Sicilian. However, by now I had realized that if I wanted to have a Zaitsev game included in the book, I had to grab any opportunity that presented itself.

2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♖e8

For the reasoning behind this move-order, see Line 4D.

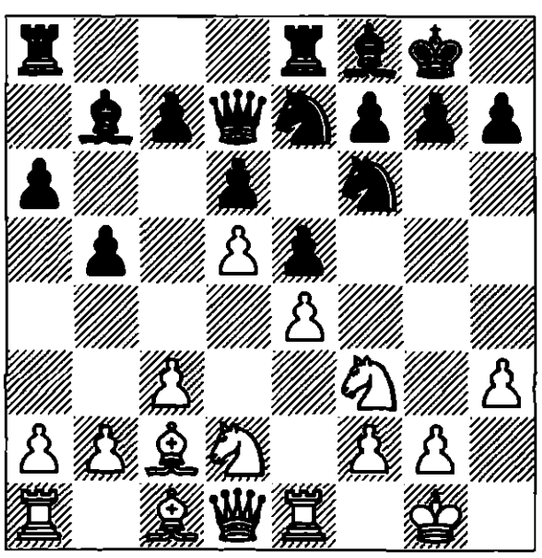
10 ♘g5 ♖f8 11 ♘f3

This is a possibility you have to take into account when playing the Zaitsev against a considerably lower rated opponent. You cannot even accuse White of cowardice, as he can always claim to have planned only a twofold repetition (unless you allow the third repetition, when it really is too late to complain).

11...♕d7!?

Chapter 4, where we deal with various ways to avoid the draw, has the apt heading 'Imperfection'. However, the same label could very well be put on the text-move; it's hardly Black's objectively best move at this juncture! For a player who seeks perfection, we must recommend 11...♖e8 or 11...♗b7. Speaking of the latter, that was my main alternative to the text-move. After 12 d4, I had looked at 12...♕d7 in my preparation (12...♖e8 would allow 13 ♘g5 ♖f8 14 ♘f3 again). This seems to work rather well after 13 ♘bd2 ♖ae8!? 14 ♘f1 exd4 15 cxd4 ♘a5 16 ♗c2 and now the typical 16...d5! (it is important to challenge White's perfect centre, forcing concessions) 17 e5 ♘e4, etc. A young Peter Svidler used to play this variation regularly with Black. We deal with this in Line 4C. However, in the end I decided upon the text-move, which we consider a good practical try. It avoids the repetition and forces White to think independently at a very early stage. My opponent, an experienced Ruy Lopez player, spent oceans of time for his next few moves.

12 d4 ♖e8 13 ♘bd2 ♗f8 14 ♗c2 ♗b7 15 d5 ♘e7 *(D)*



So far, everything has been according to our analysis. But now comes a novelty:

16 ♘b3!?

An unpleasant surprise for me! The move is slightly unthematic, but contains two concrete positional threats: firstly ♘a5, when the knight will be a thorn in Black's queenside. And secondly ♗g5, when the f6-knight has no satisfactory retreat. I felt that my next was practically forced.

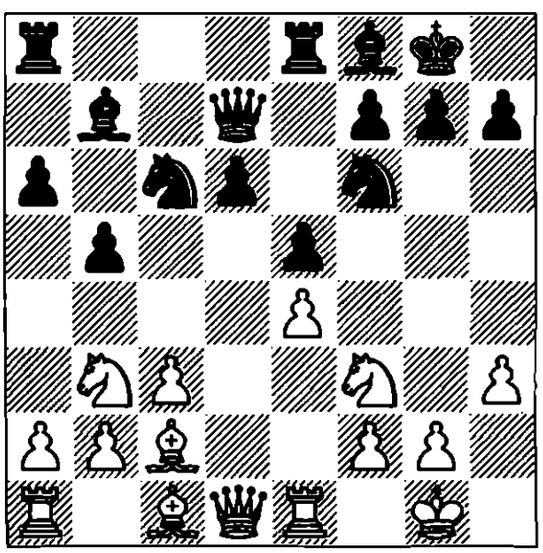
16...c6

16...a5 looks natural, but then I didn't see how to respond to 17 ♗g5. Despite having a fair amount of experience on the black side of the Sveshnikov, allowing my kingside structure to be wrecked by ♗xf6 was definitely not to my liking here! It must be said, however, that with the moves a3 and ...♖ad8 included, such a strong player as Balashov has played the simple 16...h6 in this position, with the point of meeting 17 ♘a5 with 17...c6. Still, I don't like to give up this bishop. After the simple 18 ♘xb7 (18 c4 is analogous to Psakhis-Balashov, USSR Ch (Vilnius) 1980/1) 18...♕xb7 19 dxc6 ♘xc6 (after 19...♕xc6 20 ♕e2, the ...d5 break is hard to organize because it will leave e5 weak) 20 ♕e2, the unchallenged 'Spanish bishop' on c2 may not look too impressive at the moment. Nevertheless, it is doing a great job in discouraging ...d5 from Black, practically his only plan in such positions. In my perception of chess, White is substantially better.

17 dxc6

We both calculated the variation 17 ♗g5!?, but probably White doesn't quite have sufficient compensation for the pawn after 17...cxd5 18 ♗xf6 gxf6 19 exd5 ♗xd5 20 ♘h4 ♗e6 21 ♕h5 ♘g6, etc. This is indeed very reminiscent of a Sveshnikov! It is important that the idea 22 f4? fails tactically because of 22...♕a7+! followed by ...♕f2.

17...♘xc6 *(D)*

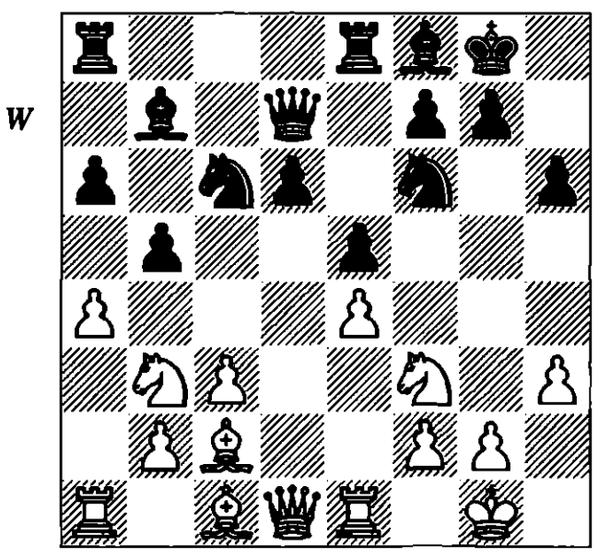


With the white queen's knight on f1, I would probably have captured with the queen or bishop to maximize my control of the d5-square. However, here it is important to prevent ♘a5.

18 a4

After 18 ♗g5, I can now defend the knight comfortably with 18...♕e6 (but not 18...♗e7?, which fails to the surprising tactical trick 19 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 20 ♘c5!); e.g., 19 ♘bd2 (the knight has no purpose any more on b3 and is back on its traditional route to e3 or g3 via f1) 19...♘a5 with a normal position where Black looks fine. He has good influence on the d5-square at the moment and can increase his control even more by moves like ...♖ad8 and eventually ...♘c4-b6.

18...h6 *(D)*



At this point I was quite happy with the outcome of the opening. My plan is a simple one: ...♖ad8, maybe ...♕c7 and then eventually the thematic ...d5. I didn't really see what he was going to do about it. The b3-knight is far away from the d5-square.

19 ♘h2!

This is a good plan though: he is going to play ♘g4 to remove a defender of the d5-square. The position is probably balanced at this point.

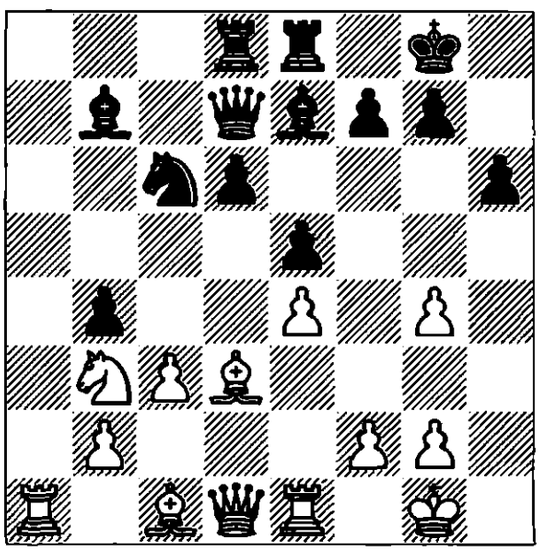
19...♖ad8

19...d5 20 ♘g4 is nothing special for Black – the queen is loose on d7. However, 19...b4!? was a move I considered seriously. A move like 20 ♗d2 is normal in similar situations, to prevent a weakening of the pawn-structure after ...bxc3, ♗xc3. However, then Black can play 20...d5! as there is no pin on the d-file any more and 21 ♘g4 can be met with 21...♘xe4. However, I wasn't sure about the position after 20 c4!?; e.g., 20...♕e6 21 ♗d3 ♘d7 22 ♘f1 ♘c5 23 ♘e3, when he lands his knight on d5 and has easy play.

20 axb5 axb5 21 ♘g4 ♘xg4 22 hxg4 ♗e7

I thought it was necessary to stop him from playing g5; e.g., 22...b4 23 g5 bxc3 24 bxc3 hxg5 25 ♗xg5 ♗e7 26 ♗e3 and the position looks rather promising for White.

23 ♗d3 b4 *(D)*



24 ♗b5!?

This move was a little scary for me of course, but objectively I parry the threats quite easily so maybe it was not the best decision. Here 24 c4 is not very good; his knight is far away from d5 and I can even consider a move like 24...♗g5!?, when I'm left with the 'good' bishop. Nor does 24 ♗d2 work well, as he has too many pieces clumped together on the d-file after this. Black would probably play something like ...d5, before or after the exchange on c3. However, 24 ♗c4!? is interesting, when the bishop makes a reappearance on its favourite diagonal, eyeing f7. Still, it seems that Black holds comfortably after 24...bxc3 25 bxc3 ♖a8! followed by a quick ...♘d8-e6.

24...bxc3 25 ♘a5

This was his point.

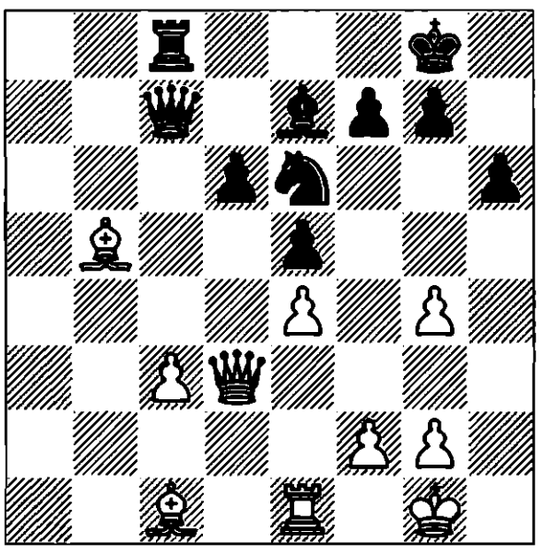
25...♖a8 26 ♖a4 ♕c7 27 ♘xb7

On 27 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 28 ♖c4, I have 28...♖eb8! which should end in a draw after 29 ♗xc6 (worse is 29 ♖xc6 ♕b7, when Black wins back the material with better chances; e.g., 30 ♕d5 cxb2 31 ♗xb2 ♖a5! – and not 31...♕xb5? 32 ♖c8+!) 29...cxb2 30 ♗xb2 ♖xb2 31 ♗d5 ♕a7 32 ♕f3 ♖f8, etc. Black's formal 'extra pawn' is not of much relevance here.

27...♕xb7 28 ♕d5 ♖ec8 29 bxc3 ♖xa4 30 ♗xa4 ♘d8!

An important manoeuvre.

31 ♕d3 ♘e6 32 ♗b5 ♕c7 *(D)*



Again I felt optimistic. My position is compact with the better pawn-structure. His bishop-pair is not really felt here. Note that my knight on e6 is doing a great job in neutralizing the 'Spanish bishop'. I think Black has a slight advantage.

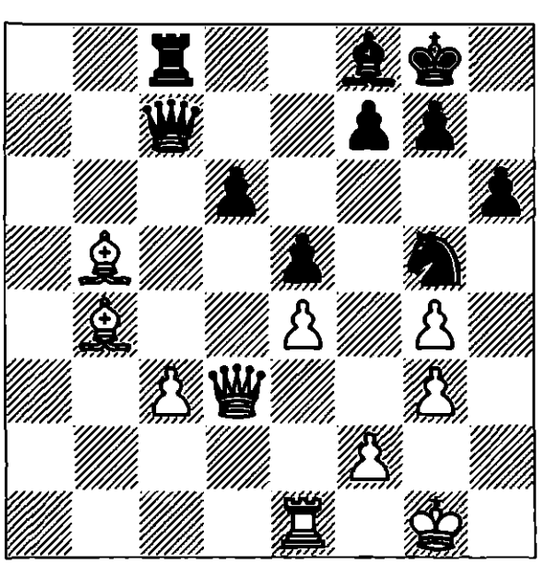
33 ♗a3!

Good defence. Instead of the passive 33 ♗d2, he finds a tactical solution (33...♕xc3? fails to 34 ♖c1).

33...♘f4 34 ♕f1 ♗f8

This overly cautious move (we were both in time-trouble, which might explain my sedate decision), throws away most of my winning chances. Immediately after the game, my opponent pointed out 34...♖a8 35 ♗b4 ♕c8!, when he is experiencing some problems in defending his g4-pawn (36 g3? ♕xg4 or 36 f3? ♖a2). Maybe this continuation would have led to a happy finish for me.

35 g3 ♘e6 36 ♗b4 ♘g5 37 ♕d3 *(D)*



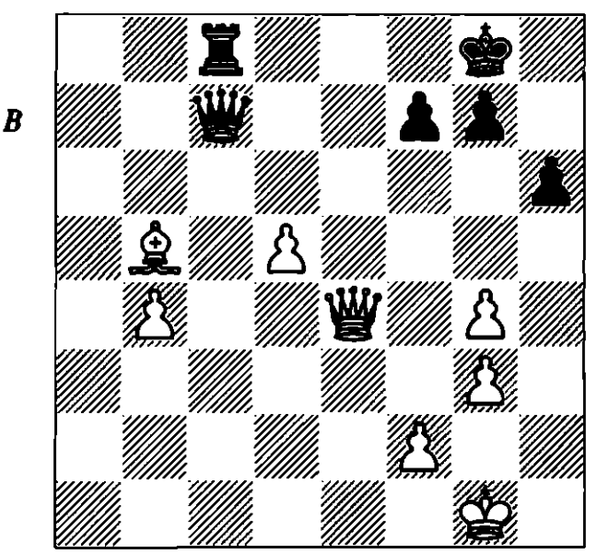
37...d5?

A hazardous decision with the flag hanging! I was frustrated because I had lost my advantage, but this could well have thrown away even the draw.

38 exd5 ♗xb4 39 cxb4 e4 40 ♖xe4

Everything is forced.

40...♘xe4 41 ♕xe4 *(D)*



Now, with the time-trouble over, I thought for 40 minutes and found what appeared to be a forced draw. The problem is that he is threatening ♗c6 and b5, when my rook is extremely passive and most endgames are winning for him. I have to try to keep my rook active on the first or second rank.

41...♕c2 42 ♗d3!

After the queen exchange, it is drawn: 42 ♕xc2? ♖xc2 43 ♗c6 ♔f8 44 b5 ♔e7 45 b6 ♖b2 46 b7 ♔d6, etc.

42...♕c1+

But not 42...♕d1+? 43 ♔h2! g6 44 d6 and White wins instantly.

43 ♔g2?

The idea I had missed was that after 43 ♔h2 g6 44 d6 ♕c6 45 ♕e7 ♖e8 46 b5! ♕a8 White has 47 ♕c7! ♖c8 48 b6! ♖xc7 49 bxc7 followed by ♗a6, and White's advanced pawns are decisive.

43...g6 44 ♗b5

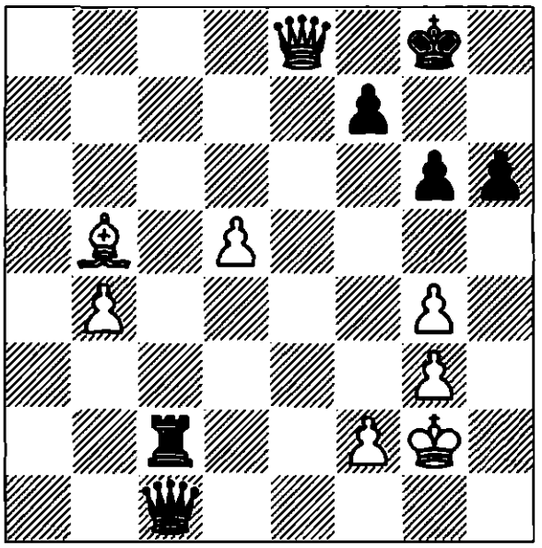
Here 44 d6 ♕c6! forces the exchange of queens with an immediate draw.

44...♖c2 45 ♕e8+ *(D)*

He has to take the perpetual as I am too active now.

45...♔g7 46 ♕e5+ ♔g8 47 ♕e8+ ♔g7 48 ♕e5+ ♔g8 49 ♕e8+ ½-½

B



Not the perfect outcome of my first Closed Ruy Lopez maybe, but not that bad either. I think it was an interesting game and hopefully my feeling for some of the characteristic positions has improved.

Step 12: Sidestepping

Probably I will play the Zaitsev less frequently when this book is in the stores. Please don't consider that a betrayal – it's mainly a result of the current realities of GM chess. It will also be proof that I didn't keep any secrets back. What you find in this book is what I know about the Zaitsev and White's early deviations.

This would obviously have been different if I had prepared the Zaitsev just for my own use. However, you must always take into account what information your opponent has access to. You may not have published a book, but even if you are a humble club player you are quite likely to have some games in the huge chess databases.

I expect to be playing various lines of the Closed Ruy Lopez fairly frequently for the rest of my chess career. The ease with which you can add new lines is one of the greatest bonuses of learning a Closed Ruy Lopez line. And when I have sufficient improvements in my analysis or when I consider it unlikely that my opponent has prepared specifically for the main lines treated here, I will be happy to use the Zaitsev or 9...♛d7 again.

In the meantime remember: my next book could be on the Marshall Attack!

Part 1: Introduction

When considering adopting a new opening you could do worse than asking yourself these two questions:

1) Is it a quality opening?

2) Will it make me a more successful player?

Note that these are not variations of the same question – not all good openings will improve your results. However, if both questions can be answered with a resounding **yes**, the time has come to ask a third question:

3) How can I best learn it?

These are the questions we seek to answer in this introduction.

A Quality Opening

However we choose to define a classic, a *sine qua non* is that the material lends itself to reinterpretation in the light of changing circumstances.

MATTHEW GUREWITSCH, *A Country of Lesser Giants*

It's not really necessary to discuss whether the Closed Ruy Lopez is a quality opening. The various main lines of the Closed Ruy Lopez, that is the Chigorin, the Breyer and the Zaitsev (generally in that chronological order) have all been played in world championship matches and by most of the top players.

If there ever was a vote over the all-time 'main line of the main lines' against 1 e4, we suppose it would be a close contest between the Najdorf Sicilian and the Closed Ruy Lopez. Still we believe the Closed Ruy would in the end come out as the winner. Except for the pure quality of each of Black's moves, there are a few more reasons:

1) The Closed Ruy is a classical opening in the true meaning of the word. It's extremely sound and based on the classical opening principles: quick development, a healthy share of the centre, flexibility, avoiding unnecessary pawn weaknesses, etc. Therefore it's a perfect choice for a top-level match, where Black's main ambition is to equalize, and a draw is an excellent achievement.

Correspondingly, it will require patience and hard work to beat a weaker opponent and may not be the ideal weapon for a big Swiss tournament where you are among the highest rated.

2) It's an opening with extraordinary traditions and has been played by virtually all the greats of the past: Chigorin, Steinitz, Lasker, Capablanca, Alekhine – just name your hero from the past and he is likely to have played it from both sides.

Consequently it's not a great surprise weapon. An opponent who is unprepared for the Closed Ruy Lopez will be unprepared for almost anything.

3) The main lines are still being developed at the very highest level. The theory is maintained by today's finest theorists and is a popular battleground for chess gladiators of all abilities.

Therefore it's not an opening you learn once and for all and it's not a 'low maintenance' weapon.

We shall examine each of these qualities in turn.

Classical Principles

When you can measure what you are speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind.

LORD KELVIN

The Classicists came forth as the leading chess school towards the end of the 19th century, with Siegbert Tarrasch as their principal spokesman. One of their main goals was to base chess on scientific rules. In comparison with the great

strides that were being made in many branches of the natural sciences, how much easier it must have seemed to bring order to the chaos of an eight-by-eight miniature universe in black and white! It is no wonder that it was at this time that the Ruy Lopez and the Queen's Gambit Declined rose to prominence, for in these two openings the game seems to develop along a predictable course:

- The roles are clear and logical: White's first move ensures that for a long time he will have the initiative. Black's strategy is first to equalize, and then to try to win if an opportunity occurs.
- Both sides immediately secure a central foothold and are not going to give up their fair share of the centre without a good reason.
- Rapid development is essential but there is still some room for manoeuvring. The quality of the available piece manoeuvres can to some extent be derived from the pawn-formations.

The naïve belief in a 'scientific' approach to chess has diminished somewhat since then, but if you like to be in control of your games and understand what's happening on the board, then the Closed Ruy Lopez is the ideal opening for you.

On the Shoulders of Giants

If I have seen further than others it is because I have been standing on the shoulders of giants.
ISAAC NEWTON

The value of a classic schooling should not be underestimated. It can be complemented by modern principles, but never replaced.

The Closed Ruy Lopez has been played by most of the game's greatest players from Chigorin and Capablanca to Karpov, Kasparov, Kramnik, Anand and Topalov. Actually, you will find that most of them have played both sides.

One good reason that the games of the old masters are very instructive, is that there was often a huge difference in class or chess understanding between the players. This allowed the better player to create a 'model game' where he was permitted to carry out his strategy unhindered.

Let's have a look at a game by two of the leading players of the classical era:

Maroczy – Capablanca
New York 1924

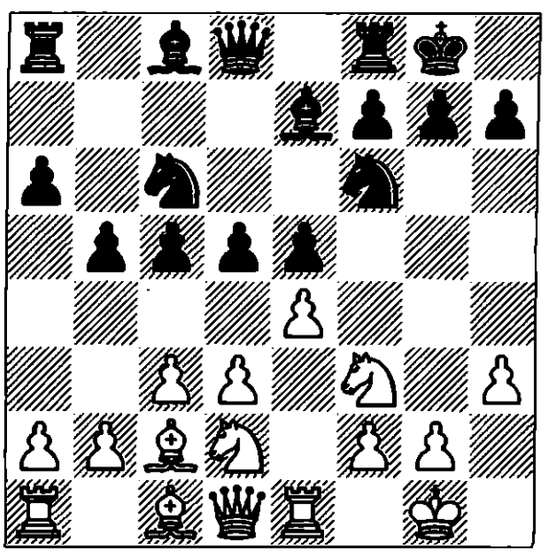
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 0-0 8 c3 d6 9 h3 ♘a5

Our two recommendations are 9...♗b7 and 9...♕d7, but if White meets these moves with 10 d3, play will be very reminiscent of this game.

10 ♗c2 c5 11 d3

In the tournament book Alekhine gives an instructive comment here, saying that the text-move is inconsistent; h3 is obviously a preparation for d4! When White stops on d3, Black can already think about seizing the initiative.

11...♘c6 12 ♘bd2 d5! *(D)*



If ...d5 is possible in the Open Games, then Black should play it – a simple piece of wisdom but not very useful as it's not at all easy to judge when it's 'possible'. We don't consider this exact position in our theoretical discussion, but play is reminiscent of Line 6E, the Pilnik Variation.

13 ♘f1

It would have been interesting to see how Capablanca would have responded to 13 exd5. Six years before this game was played, Frank Marshall had introduced his famous pawn sacrifice versus Capablanca himself. Even though he lost that game, he created quite a few problems for his mighty opponent! Today, we believe most GMs would have few qualms playing the black position after 13...♘xd5 14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 15 ♖xe5 ♗b7. It looks like a rather good version

of the Marshall Attack. Still, we are inclined to believe that Capablanca would have gone for the safe and solid 13...♕xd5, which keeps the material balance with a good position. Unfortunately, we shall never know what the Cuban genius had in mind.

13...dxe4

This is harmless and should have led to an equal and rather boring endgame. Alekhine recommends 13...d4! instead, with an initiative. It is difficult for White to create counterplay on the kingside; 14 g4 is met by the typical 14...h5!.

14 dxe4 ♗e6 15 ♗d2

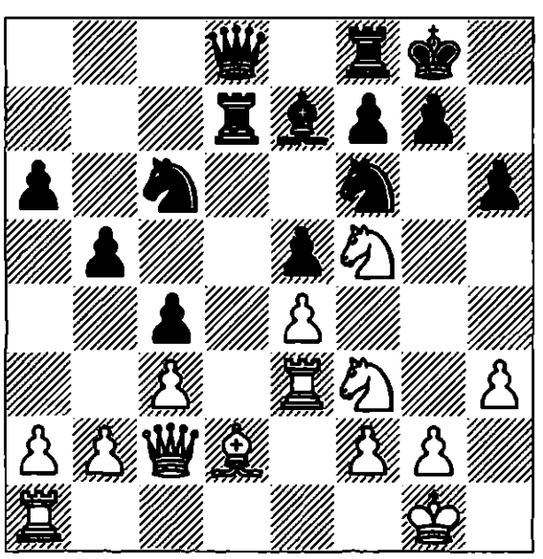
There was no reason for White to avoid the queen exchange. Alekhine gives 15 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 16 ♗g5 followed by ♘e3 with strong drawing tendencies.

15...♖a7 16 ♘g5!?

White gives up the d3-point, but has a concrete idea in mind: he will gain the f5-square for his knight as compensation.

16...♗c4 17 ♘e3 ♗d3 18 ♗xd3 ♕xd3 19 ♘f5 h6 20 ♖e3 ♕d8 21 ♘f3 ♖d7 22 ♕c2 c4 *(D)*

W



23 ♘xe7+?

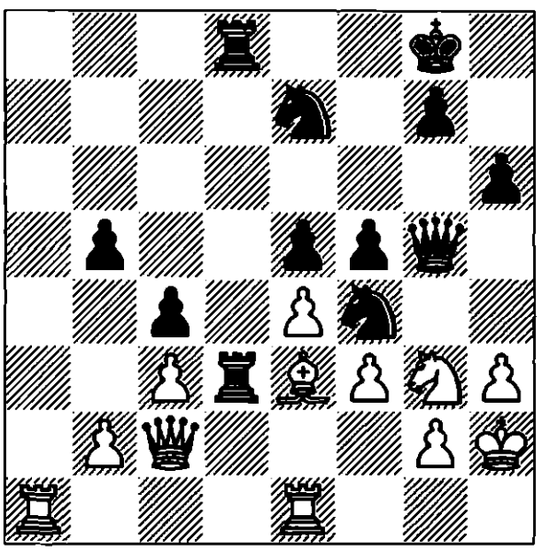
This is strongly criticized by Alekhine. It seems White completely forgot about his former strategy! Of course he should have kept his strong knight. A move like 23 a4 would have retained the dynamic balance. After 23...♗c5 24 ♖e2, Black has to pay attention to the threat of ♗xh6! followed by ♕c1.

23...♕xe7 24 a4 ♖fd8 25 axb5 axb5 26 ♖ee1 ♕e6 27 ♗e3 ♖d3 28 ♘d2 ♘e7!

Capablanca transfers his idle knight to greener pastures on the kingside.

29 f3 ♘h5 30 ♘f1 f5 31 ♗f2 ♕g6 32 ♔h2 ♕g5 33 ♗e3 ♘f4! 34 ♘g3 *(D)*

B



34...♖xe3!

This is a 'real sacrifice' in the sense that Black will not immediately regain his material. However, it's not difficult to decide on the text-move as the complete destruction of White's kingside will provide overwhelming compensation.

35 ♖xe3 ♘xg2 36 ♖e2 ♘f4 37 ♖d2 ♖f8?

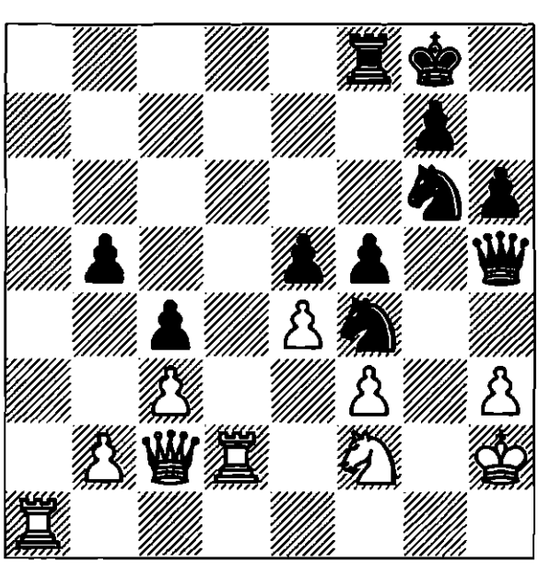
This makes the win far more complicated than necessary. The simple 37...♖xd2+ 38 ♕xd2 ♕h4 would have won on the spot.

38 ♘h1?

A mistake in return. Alekhine gives 38 ♕d1, to be able to meet 38...♕h4 with 39 ♕f1, as a better defensive try.

38...♕h5 39 ♘f2 ♘eg6! *(D)*

W



Now the Cuban is back on track.

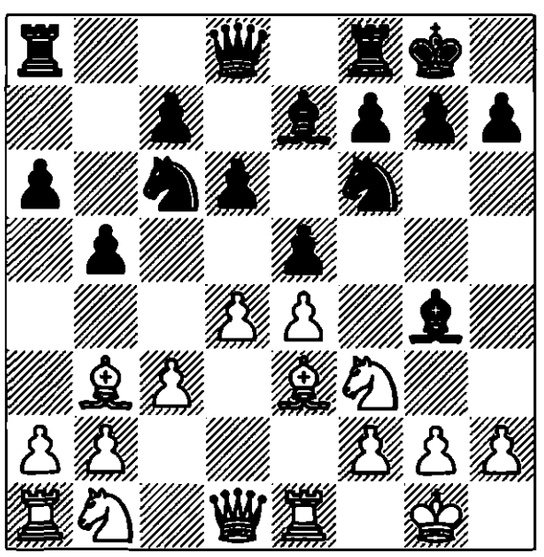
40 ♕d1 ♘h4 41 ♖d8 ♘xf3+ 42 ♔h1 ♘d3! 43 ♖xd3 cxd3 44 ♕xd3 f4! 45 ♕d1 ♖f6 46

♖a8+ ♔h7 47 ♕d5 ♘g5! 48 ♕g8+ ♔g6 49 ♕e8+ ♘f7 50 ♕c8 ♕f3+ 51 ♔g1 ♕g3+ 52 ♔f1 f3 53 ♕g4+ ♕xg4 54 hxg4 ♔g5! 55 ♖a5 ♘d6 56 ♘d3 ♔xg4 57 ♘xe5+ ♔g3 0-1

What about the well-known saying "All is new that is long forgotten"? Is there valuable theoretical material to be found in the games from past eras? Our general impression is that in the main lines the best moves are still remembered, but of course a computer-aided search in the old tournament records will turn up some interesting points. We had great fun studying the following game:

Capablanca – Ed. Lasker
London (casual game) 1913

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 d4!? ♗g4 10 ♗e3 *(D)*



10...♘xe4!?

In Lines 6A and 6B we recommend 10...exd4 11 cxd4 d5.

11 ♗d5

If you first noticed that White's 10th move left his e-pawn without direct protection and then a moment later saw that it lost a piece to the bishop fork, then you are probably an alert tactician. However, there is more to the story:

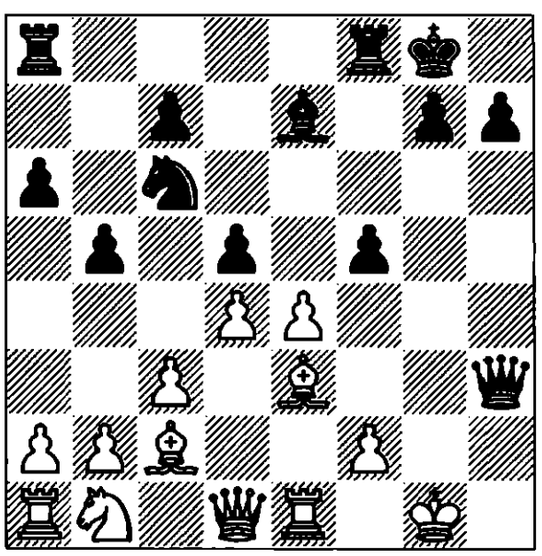
11...♕d7! 12 dxe5

This sober reply spoils a lot of the fun for Black. His point was 12 ♗xe4 d5, when Kozomara-Karaklajić, Sombor 1957 is an entertaining example of what can happen: 13 ♗c2 (13 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 14 dxe5 has been tried, but Black has various ways to obtain full compensation, the most aggressive being 14...♕f5!?) 13...e4 14 h3 ♗xf3!? (after 14...♗h5, 15 ♘e5! ♗xd1 16 ♘xd7 ♗xc2 17 ♘xf8 has been cited as providing a slight advantage for White, but it is worth noting that the computers don't agree with this and evaluate the position after 17...♔xf8 or 17...♖xf8 as roughly equal) 15 gxf3 ♕xh3. In this entertaining position, Black has three attacking ideas: the obvious ...exf3, but also ...♗d6 and ...f5 followed by ...♖f6-g6/h6. We shall not try to give an exhaustive analysis of this complicated position, but judging by current practice White is struggling just to maintain the balance:

a) 16 f4 f5 gives Black an attack; e.g., 17 ♘d2 ♖f6 18 ♘f1 ♖h6 19 ♘g3 ♗h4 and Black is already winning.

b) 16 ♘d2 ♗d6 17 fxe4 ♗h2+ leads to a draw by perpetual check.

c) After 16 fxe4 f5 *(D)* there is a further split:



c1) 17 exd5? is bad: 17...♗d6 18 f4 ♖f6 19 ♔f2 ♕h2+ 20 ♔f1 ♖g6 21 ♕f3 ♖g3 22 ♕xg3 ♕xg3 23 dxc6 ♖e8 −+.

c2) 17 ♕e2? fxe4 18 ♕f1 ♕f5! followed by ...♖f6-g6 wins for Black too.

c3) 17 e5? is a critical line, but 17...f4 18 ♕d3 ♕g4+ 19 ♔f1 g6 looks very good for Black:

c31) 20 ♗d1 f3 21 ♗xf3 ♖xf3 22 ♘d2 ♖h3 23 f3 ♖h1+ 24 ♔e2 ♕g2+ 25 ♗f2 ♖h2 −+.

c32) Fritz prefers 20 ♗c1 ♗h4 21 ♖d1 ♘e7 22 ♗b3 until it discovers 22...♖f5 23 ♖d2 (or 23 ♔e1 ♗xf2+ 24 ♔xf2 ♕h4+ 25 ♔e2 ♕h2+ 26 ♔e1 ♖g5 −+) 23...f3 24 ♔e1 c5 25 ♕f1 and

now 25...♖h5!! with the amazing point ...♕g2! and ...♗g5!, when it's clear that Black is winning.

c4) 17 ♘d2 fxe4 18 ♘xe4!? dxe4 19 ♗xe4 ♗d6! with a strong attack for Black in a position with equal material.

c5) 17 exf5 ♗d6 18 f4 ♕g3+ is a well-known draw.

Now the game quickly turned into a comedy of errors:

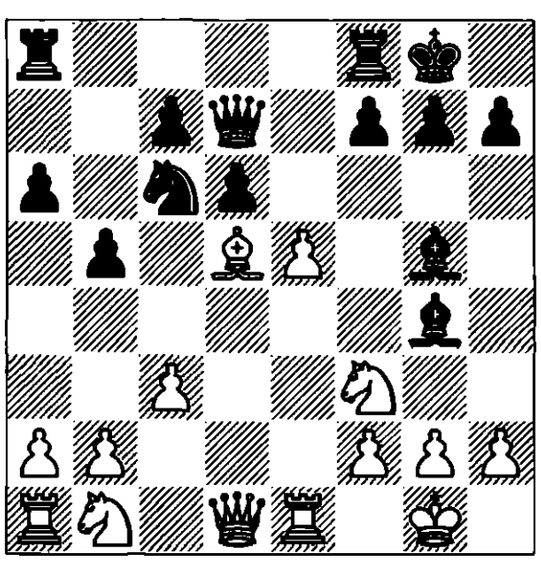
12...♘g5??

12...♘c5 is of course better, when it is actually not so easy to prove an advantage for White:

a) 13 h3 is harmless. After 13...♗e6 14 exd6 (14 ♗xc5 dxc5 15 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 is a better version, but Black is still very solid here) 14...♗xd6 15 ♗xc5 ♗xd5! 16 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 17 ♘bd2 ♖fe8, Black was even slightly better in H.Johner-O.Bernstein, Zurich 1934.

b) 13 ♗xc5 is critical: 13...dxc5 14 ♗e4 ♕xd1 15 ♖xd1 and now 15...♖ad8?! 16 ♘bd2 gave White a slight advantage in Foguelman-Alvarez del Monte, Rio Hondo 1966, mostly because of his better pawn-structure. However, instead of Black's feeble 15th move, we recommend the sacrifice 15...♘xe5! 16 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 17 ♘bd2 ♘d3 with very decent compensation for Black, an evaluation with which the computers agree.

13 ♗xg5 ♗xg5 *(D)*



14 ♘xg5??

14 h3! would have won on the spot. We can only presume that the players wanted to entertain their audience!

14...♗xd1 15 e6 fxe6??

Now 15...♕d8! would have won.

16 ♗xe6+ ♕xe6 17 ♘xe6 ♖ae8 18 ♘d2 ♖f6 19 ♖axd1 ♖fxe6 20 ♔f1

Capablanca managed to win this equal endgame.

Will this be a massive point-scorer in your tournament games? We wouldn't expect so (otherwise we would have advocated this line in our theoretical discussion of the 9 d4 ♗g4 10 ♗e3 line) but for a rapid game it could be an excellent surprise weapon. In his book *Play 1 e4 e5!*, Davies laconically states about 10 ♗e3 that "White simply protects d4, as Black can't play 10...♘xe4 in view of 11 ♗d5." Discovering that the truth is not quite as simple will certainly come as a shock to some of your opponents.

Room for Creativity

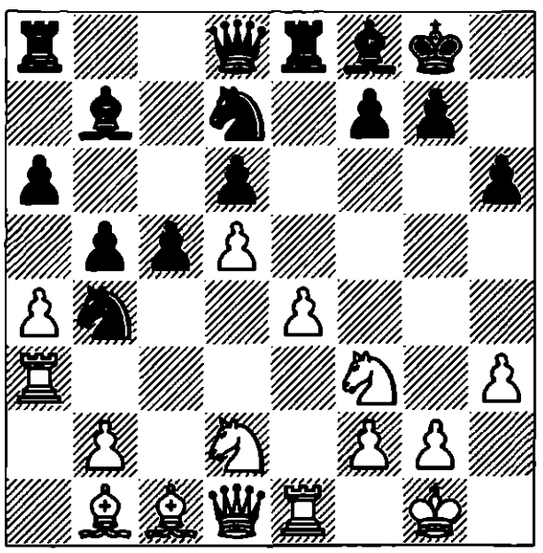
If I have not seen as far as others it is because giants have been standing on my shoulders.
HAL ABELSON, MIT Professor

You should of course take advantage of the opportunity to learn from the chess giants. Contrary to some romantic notions, knowledge of other people's experiences and conclusions is not likely to reduce the originality of your own thoughts. Days of intense struggling with the known facts followed by some more relaxed hours when your subconscious can do its work have been the key to many creative breakthroughs. However, be careful that you don't allow the authority of the chess giants to suppress your own creativity.

Some strong players even suggest that a good way to become familiar with an opening is quickly to play through a lot of unannotated games, not in order to learn precise variations or to understand exactly what is going on, but rather to present your brain with a chance to detect some standard patterns. This mechanical approach may not work equally well for all players or for all openings, but it has the advantage that it will not burden your mind with unnecessary dogma, possibly allowing some free thoughts based on well-known ideas.

We consider the Zaitsev still to be fertile ground. The fundamental stability of Black's pawn-centre and his quick development leave great room for improvisation. While writing this book we were struck several times by how

small a proportion of all playable moves had really been tested at a high level. A particularly interesting case was this important position, where Black has tried only four moves: 17...f5, 17...c4, 17...g6 and 17...bxa4:



While contemplating this position, we noted that although the position appears rather tense, it is not at all clear what White should do if he were to move again. Most of White's available moves have a dark side that can outweigh their positive features:

- Against ♘f1 Black would respond ...f5 and claim that he has an improved version of the 17...f5 line (Lines 1A-1C), as White's knight will need an extra move to get to e4.
- Against ♘h2, on the other hand, Black would play ...c4, claiming that the white knight belongs on d4 in that line.
- A third, and perhaps more flexible, move is ♖ae3!?, which probably improves White's position without committing his knights. However, a rook on e3 can also be turned into a liability when after ...f5 and exf5 Black plays ...♘xd5 with an attack on the rook.

On basis of the above considerations, one might argue that this position is an example of what Rowson calls 'zugzwang-lite' – a position where all available useful moves allow the opponent a favourable reply because of the new information provided.

A further indication that this could be right is provided by a function that is available in most analysis engines, called 'null-move' (normally used to identify zugzwang positions or establishing whether your opponent has a threat). In this position most analysis engines don't change their evaluations much depending on whether White is allowed to move again.

Black's challenge is to find a move which improves his position without giving White too much information. As we shall see in our theoretical discussion, 17...f5 makes it clear that ♘h2 followed by a rook swing along the third rank will be effective. 17...c4 on the other hand tells White that his knight should head for d4 instead. Finally, 17...g6 makes it clear that Black is not playing for ...f5, so that ♘f1 is the natural way to complete White's mobilization.

On our search for a useful waiting move, our first try was 17...♔h8!?, which is a move Black quite often plays as a defensive move in the 17...f5 lines. It seemed to work fairly well analytically, but with no practical examples available, it was close to impossible to establish the main lines. We also had a nagging feeling that in some variation White would find a way to make ♘h4, threatening ♘g6+, work – turning the king move into a disadvantage.

So we returned to the diagram position, and our second search came up with 17...♖c8!?, which seemed at least marginally useful. In the ...c4 lines, the c-file is quite likely to be opened after ...♘d3 and ♗xd3, while in the ...f5 lines, ...♖c7 can be a useful defensive resource. A minor drawback may be that Black deserts the a-file, which White is able to open at will, but actually that file seems to be of little practical relevance.

This was our modest attempt at creativity. Feel free to test it out in your own games if you like to, but remember the risks associated with over-the-board testing.

However, if you want to produce something that is entirely new, and only yours, then you must look elsewhere. You should probably first familiarize yourself with what is already known and then have a long look for sensible alternatives – quite possibly assisted by an analysis engine.

To cite Keene on opening novelties: "To put the operation at its crudest level: *if you set up any opening position on your board and look for moves (which are obviously not blunders) which have not been played before and start to analyse them with a concrete strategic or tactical aim in view, then you may be on the track of an important new theoretical idea.*"

Don't let the weight of the giants become a burden. Make sure that you are the one at the top!

A Modern Favourite

Most of the change we think we see in life is due to truths being in and out of favour.
ROBERT FROST

A theoretical main line is by definition tested at the highest level and has proved its worth by its pure chess qualities. However, playing a main line has additional advantages. Most importantly, studying it will allow you to study the games of the greatest masters – quite frequently with their annotations as a bonus.

In addition there is a very practical advantage: even the strongest lines occasionally run into theoretical problems after a new move is introduced. While you can frequently solve such a problem yourself by some hours of analysis or simply by varying your move-orders a little, it is hard to defend a line all by yourself. One of the advantages of playing a main line is the number of top players who employ it and are ready to rush in to save your side if a repair is needed.

After more than a hundred years of top-level battles and analytical scrutiny, there is little discussion about the natural outcome of a well-played Closed Ruy Lopez. White should end up with a small but noticeable plus, or '±' in modern chess language. This kind of position is highly appreciated by modern chess professionals because it allows White to play for a win with very little risk of losing. The Zaitsev is an attempt by Black to complicate matters somewhat, but theory still considers that White has that little plus.

Should a theoretical novelty change the verdict of a major line to 'equal' or 'unclear', players will calmly go back to their analysis boards looking for improvements for White. They have every right to expect their search to be fruitful – anything else would contradict century-old wisdom. Similarly, if a line suddenly appears to give White a larger advantage, players will start their search for a repair for Black with equal confidence. If the search takes some time, that isn't really such a big deal, as there are always substitutes available in the form of related variations (presumably with a healthy enough theoretical status).

A Great Learning Tool

Multiple exclamation marks are a sure sign of a diseased mind.
TERRY PRATCHETT, *Eric*

Establishing that the Closed Ruy Lopez is a great opening does not really mean that much. We mainly play chess to win games and to become stronger players. Playing a good opening by the book will definitely not hurt your results, but will not in itself get you that many extra points either. Only a better understanding, better calculation and an ability to avoid errors will significantly improve your score. The key to success in chess is specialization.

Specialization

In *Test and Improve Your Chess*, Lev Alburt makes a great case for specialization in chess. He presents readers with a position featuring an isolated queen's pawn that can arise from almost any opening and lists all the benefits that can be gained by a dedicated study of this position. Among the benefits that Alburt lists are these:

- Increased understanding and playing strength if you succeed in getting your speciality in an actual game.
- Improved understanding of related positions.
- Improved understanding of how chess positions should be analysed and studied.
- When seeing your improved results, you will gain increased confidence in your ability to study and improve your chess.

We must admit that Alburt has probably identified the single most useful chess position to study, but we believe a good case can be made for the 'main line of the main lines' as well. It's a close to perfect learning tool for the developing player as it can lead to extremely varied positions and clearly demonstrates the connection between strategy and tactics.

It must be admitted that the Closed Ruy Lopez, and in particular the Zaitsev Variation,

is not the ideal opening subject for a pure beginner. For this category of players, a study of the Two Knights Opening, the Scotch Gambit and a heavy dose of Morphy's games is probably a better prescription. However, provided that you are well acquainted with the basics of chess, we hope this book can help you, not only to learn a great opening but more importantly to become a genuinely stronger player.

This no doubt will make some coaches cry out in indignation. Do we really recommend intermediate players to spend their study time on memorizing variations starting just before move 20? Wouldn't an improving player be better advised to study tactics and annotated games by the greatest masters? If this is your reaction, we can only ask you to take another look at our main-line position in Chapter 1. What do you see if not an interesting and tactically loaded middlegame position – a position that has been played and analysed by the strongest modern players? What we really are studying in the Zaitsev Variation is typical middlegames – or even more precisely: contemporary grandmaster praxis in this particular opening variation.

As for the memorization part, we believe it's close to impossible to study a position in order to understand its mechanics and subtleties without remembering much of it for some time. Only experience can teach you what needs to be memorized and what is just examples of how strong players have handled the position. Forcing sequences where a single mistake may cost you the game obviously are hot candidates for memorization. On the other hand, if you really understand what's going on, you should be able to reproduce these moves too fairly effortlessly.

In the last few years there has been a keen discussion about the 'rule-independence' of modern chess, that is, the notion that top-class players are no longer relying so much on general principles to make their decisions. There seems to be a consensus that 'rules' tend to be more useful when applied to a later stage of the game or to a specific position. Thus a rule like 'After ...♗g4, h3 and ...♗h5 in a semi-closed Ruy Lopez position, White is generally better if he is tactically able to follow up g4 with an immediate ♘h4, winning the f5-square' is probably worth more than, e.g., 'a knight on the rim is dim'.

We hope that by starting with a few fairly distinct positions around move 19, any conclusion, rule or advice we come up with will be appropriately founded in concrete positional features. Hopefully this will also allow the student to understand the reason behind these 'rules' and when they should be disregarded.

Having familiarized yourself thoroughly with these critical positions, you should be ready to backtrack through the moves leading up to these positions, so that you are ready to meet any of White's possible deviations. If after having finished this book you have some understanding of such matters as when to meet White's d5 with ...♘e7 and when to prefer ...♘a5 or ...♘b8, then we feel we have succeeded.

Learning the Closed Ruy Lopez

You only need to know enough opening theory to avoid it.
BENT LARSEN

If by now you are convinced that the Closed Lopez is not only a high-quality opening but also that studying it will make you a stronger player, then we are ready for the third main question: how can you best learn it? Let's first get our attitude right:

DON'T PANIC

All you need in this life is ignorance and confidence, and then success is sure.
MARK TWAIN

Starting at move 9, the Closed Ruy Lopez is a dense forest of related and frequently transposing lines, mostly tested extensively at top GM level. This has to be reflected in any theoretical work – and the result will often look intimidating, with lines only starting to branch out around move 20. So before we start our explorations we must emphasize: **DON'T PANIC.**

Except for a few well-researched positions of a tactical nature (in particular the Zaitsev main lines), you will not need to memorize a lot of variations. In most lines of the Closed Ruy

Lopez a good understanding of the specific ideas is much more important than rote learning. So despite the accumulated top-level practice, you should not attempt to memorize non-forcing lines that do not make sense to you.

We say this because it's true about this particular branch of opening theory, not because it is generally so for most opening lines. There certainly are openings that require memorization (unless you play them in order to improve your calculation and don't care about your results). Actually, a thick forest of variations does not usually indicate that this line requires a lot of memorizing. On the contrary, it normally indicates that at this point both players have a lot of playable options, and that you should be able to come up with a good move by your own reasoning, as long as you understand what is going on. While memory and calculation certainly isn't a drawback, understanding is the keyword in the Closed Ruy Lopez – not only of the static features but also of the dynamic ones. This understanding can't be gained just by studying books and databases. In addition you need to collect experience from your own tournament games, post-mortems, skittles and blitz games.

Not all openings should be approached the same way. For the Ruy Lopez we can give clear advice: concentrate on the main lines! Not only will you meet them more often; they will also be a greater challenge to meet and, not least, they will give you the deepest insight into the opening's nature. So in order to get the most out of our book, we recommend you to follow this procedure:

- First get a rough overview by reading the 'Ruy Lopez Overview' and the 'Zaitsev Overview'.
- Then start studying our recommended main line with the intention of completely mastering this branch before you move on to another subject. For some advice on how to study a position, you can consult Leif's preface. Your attitude should be something like this: *I may not be a grandmaster in chess, but on this particular branch of the game, I want to be an authority!*
- Then, when you feel that you know everything that is worth knowing about the main line and what can happen from that position, you are ready to take a step backwards and look at White's options to avoid the main line. We believe you will find that what you have already learned will be very useful for understanding these new positions.
- Continue working slowly backwards step by step, until you reach the position after 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6. By then you should also be able to judge what you need to know about White's alternatives to the Ruy Lopez.

Closed Ruy Lopez Strategy

Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.
SUN TZU, 6th century BC

The opening moves 1 e4 e5 are often called the 'Open Games' because they were traditionally considered to lead to open positions where some central pawns are exchanged quite early and the pieces have plenty of scope for action in the relatively pawnless central files.

But despite its introductory moves, the Ruy Lopez generally leads to semi-closed positions, where the pawns are mobile, and pawn exchanges are available, but generally not desirable to initiate. Its semi-closed character normally leads to a relatively slow manoeuvring game where the pieces must pay respect to the pawn-chains rather than seek immediate activity. This makes it mainly a strategic opening where quick development is somewhat less essential and the players can afford to spend some moves finding the optimal squares for their pieces or probing for pawn weaknesses. The key word is *quality* development. The semi-closed nature of the position also ensures that mistakes must generally be punished slowly.

In this book we shall concentrate on the *closed* variation in the already semi-closed Ruy Lopez. One might expect this particular branch to lead to genuinely closed positions – and indeed it occasionally does, in particular if White meets ...c5 with d5. But actually the main effect of Black choosing this particular variation is that the position remains semi-closed for a longer time.

Some Closed Ruy Lopez Concepts

For every complex problem there is a simple solution that is wrong.
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

We strongly believe that positional concepts should be considered in a concrete context, and not in an abstract explanation. That is the main reason why the theory section of this book has been arranged the way it is. Still, we would like to introduce a few standard Ruy Lopez concepts at this point. We shall not try to discuss these themes in any depth – just introduce them so that we can refer to them and feel sure that the reader associates something with them.

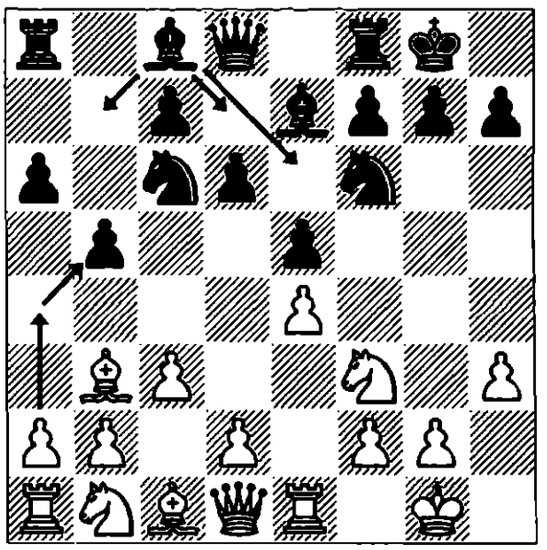
The Central Tension

At some point in the Ruy Lopez, White will usually achieve his goal of building a large pawn-centre, with pawns on c3, d4 and e4, versus a somewhat smaller black centre with pawns on e5 and d6 (and possibly c5). We shall see a lot of exceptions, but usually it will be in both sides' interest to leave this pawn confrontation unchanged. Normally ...exd4, cxd4 will increase White's spatial advantage as in reality Black has exchanged his e5-pawn with White's c3-pawn, thereby giving White a numerical advantage in the centre. Similarly, White normally will avoid making the exchange dxe5 dxe5 as that in reality exchanges his d4-pawn for Black's d6-pawn, giving Black comfortable central parity. It is worth noting that the thrust d5 is also a concession from White's point of view; he relieves the central tension and defines Black's plan of action (...c6!). In addition, it blocks the a2-g8 diagonal for the 'Spanish bishop'.

Black's b5 Weakness and the a4 Lever

In most main lines of the Ruy Lopez, Black will at some point play ...b5 in order to free his queen's knight from the pin. This has the additional bonus of allowing a bishop development to b7.

The drawback of the move is that the pawn can turn out to be a weakness, subject to attack from White with the pawn-lever a4 (usually in cooperation with a couple of pieces – possibly



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a queen on e2 and a knight on a3). The annoyance is increased by the pin on the a-file and the fact that ...bxa4 is positionally undesirable for Black, as his isolated a-pawn will become weak on the semi-open a-file. Nor is ...b4 really tempting for Black, as it weakens the c4-square (where a white knight can settle) and his queenside pawns might be separated and isolated in case of White playing a5.

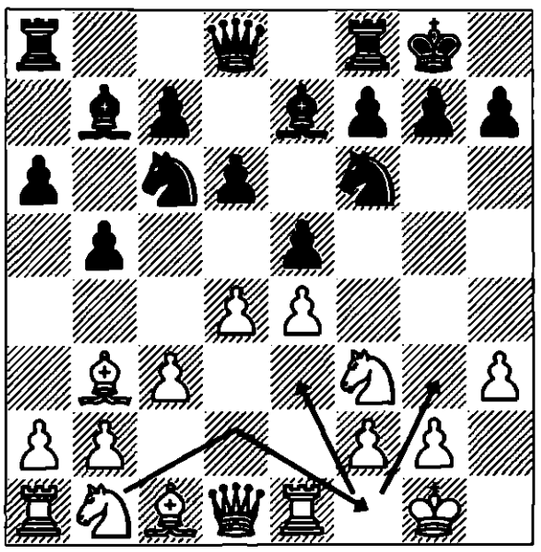
Black's Backward c-Pawn

After Black has played ...b5 and ...d6 (in order to support his pawn on e5), he will already have some slight worries about his c-pawn. First of all, he would like to use it to fight White's big centre with ...c5 or ...c6. In order to do that, he needs to move his c6-knight. However, there are some problems with most squares available to that knight – some are simply not realistic destinations while others are so far from the centre that the knight will have to be redeployed later. Secondly there is a risk that advancing the c-pawn will create new weaknesses – in particular on the neighbouring d-file.

The ♘f1-Hop

We have borrowed this term from John Shaw's book *Starting Out: The Ruy Lopez*. It may not be the most precise description, but it is the shortest. And that is a major consideration, because this theme will crop up over and over later in the book. Other terms you will encounter are 'the Ruy Lopez knight manoeuvre' or 'the ♘f1-manoeuvre'.

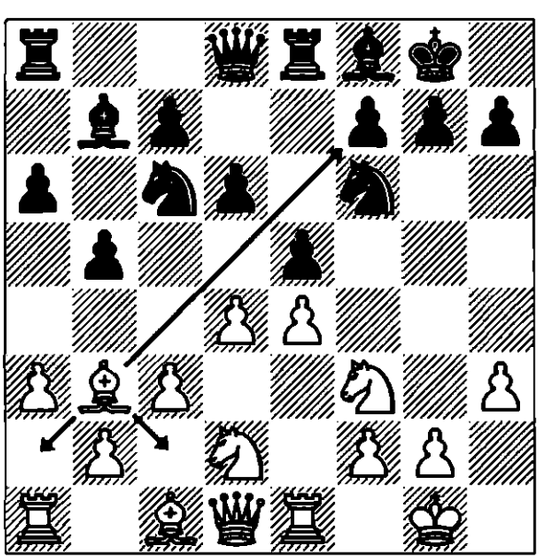
It refers to the standard manoeuvre ♘bd2-f1, usually followed by ♘g3 (or less frequently ♘e3) as shown in the diagram on the next page.



In part White needs to move the knight away from d2 in order to release his c1-bishop and thereby complete his development. However, White primarily wants to redeploy his knight because from these squares the knight has access to f5 in particular and the kingside in general. Some of Black's major Closed Ruy Lopez lines attempt to stop or delay this manoeuvre by putting pressure on White's e4-pawn.

The Spanish Bishop

This refers to White's light-squared bishop. Although at least one of White's central pawns are fairly immobile on a light square, this usually turns out to be a very effective piece.



White will often invest some time in preserving it with either a3 or a4. While it will often be a very active piece which threatens or exerts pressure on Black, it will just as often have mainly potential energy which will only materialize if Black tries to free his position with ...c6, ...d5 or ...f5.

Ruy Lopez Overview

There is luck in chess. My opponent was lucky that he was playing against an idiot.
JIM LOY

Before we dive into analytical detail, we shall try to draw a rough map of the Spanish terrain, pointing out (but not exploring in depth) the different sidetracks that are available for both sides. Most of White's alternatives are covered in detail in the theoretical sections later in the book. Black's alternatives, in contrast, are for the most part not covered elsewhere as we recommend and analyse only a limited repertoire for Black.

You will probably find that once the initial Ruy Lopez position has been reached, Black tends to have a greater number of theoretically approved lines available than White has. This is partly a result of White's third move, 3 ♗b5, which puts little direct pressure on Black, but to a greater extent it is a consequence of White's main plan, which is to form a large centre with pawns on c3 and d4 in addition to the one already on e4. This is a time-consuming strategy, and quite frequently White will find himself behind in development in the early stage of the game. This in turn will limit White's options, as it will not be in his interest to open up the position for Black's active pieces.

1 e4

Theoretically the Ruy Lopez can also occur after 1 ♘f3 ♘c6!? 2 e4 e5 3 ♗b5. However, few 1 ♘f3 players are flexible enough to enter the Ruy, so 2 d4 is by far the most popular reaction, often transposing to a Chigorin after 2...d5.

1...e5

This is Black's classical reply, and one of the few moves that (more or less) prevents White from establishing a central dominance with 2 d4. A fairly strong Norwegian player used to meet 1 e4 with 1...♘c6 (Nimzowitsch Defence) with the expressed hope of reaching a Ruy Lopez after 2 ♘f3 e5. However, most players find that preparing for the King's Gambit, Vienna Game and the Bishop's Opening is a minor task compared to learning and defending the genuine Nimzowitsch lines that occur after

1...♘c6 2 d4, when Black can choose between 2...e5 and 2...d5.

2 ♘f3

White attacks e5 and develops a kingside piece, preparing kingside castling. What more could one wish for from one move? Nevertheless 2 f4, 2 ♗c4 and 2 ♘c3 are fairly popular moves – especially at club level. For particulars on these we must refer you to John Emms's excellent book, *Play the Open Games as Black*. However, if you develop quickly with an early ...♘f6, ...0-0 and then strike back in the centre with ...d5, you are quite likely to have played theory's recommendation.

2...♘c6

Here 2...♘f6, the Petroff, has been a troublesome alternative for White for the last few decades. Also Philidor's 2...d6 is quite solid (while arguably slightly passive) and is working rather well for Black at the moment. The cult moves 2...f5 and 2...d5 cannot be recommended.

3 ♗b5 *(D)*

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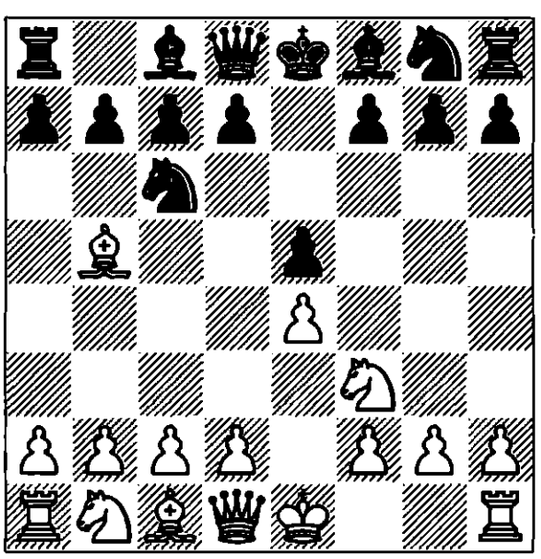


This is the Ruy Lopez (or the Spanish Opening as it is better known in some countries), which will be the subject of our book. White ignores the obvious target at f7, preferring to apply indirect pressure on the exposed e-pawn. It normally distinguishes itself from other Open Games with a more long-term, strategic kind of play than is generally found after 1 e4 e5.

While this is very clearly White's main try for a theoretical advantage, it is our impression that 3 ♗c4 and 3 d4 are just as effective at club level. Again you will probably not do too badly with limited book knowledge if you calculate accurately and live by classical virtues, developing quickly and striving for ...d5. For further details we must refer you to Emms's book, which will give you all the variations you need to meet the more direct play usually encountered in these lines.

3...a6

This is known as the Morphy Defence, after the American champion who popularized this move. By forcing White to declare his bishop's intentions, Black normally gains the possibility of breaking a pin along the a4-e8 diagonal with ...b5. However, although 3...a6 is generally accepted as Black's best move, the sheer number of playable alternatives is probably a major reason why so many players opt for alternatives to the Ruy Lopez as White:

a) 3...♘f6, the Berlin Defence, has been highly fashionable after Kramnik used it to neutralize Kasparov's opening initiative in their title match. After the principled 4 0-0 ♘xe4 5 d4 ♘d6 6 ♗xc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 ♘f5 8 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 we reach an endgame which is reminiscent of the positions examined in Chapter 8. However, there is a difference: in the Exchange Variation, White will generally strive for exchanges and the slow exploitation of his kingside pawn-majority. In the Berlin, however, White normally acts very energetically, trying to make use of his development advantage and Black's shaky king position.

b) 3...f5, the Schliemann (or Jaenisch) Gambit, is very sharp but theoretically shaky at best. The main battleground is 4 ♘c3 fxe4 5 ♘xe4 ♘f6 (or 5...d5 6 ♘xe5).

c) 3...g6, the Smyslov Variation, is solid but quite often White can disturb the harmony of Black's kingside with a timely ♗g5.

d) 3...♘d4, Bird's Defence, is better than it looks, as the Ruy Lopez bishop will often look a bit misplaced on b5 when it isn't pinning anything.

e) 3...♗c5, the Classical Defence, is probably sound but the bishop is exposed to White's standard central expansion with c3 and d4.

f) 3...d6, the Steinitz Defence, is not popular as the Steinitz Deferred with 3...a6 4 ♗a4 d6 seems better in almost every respect.

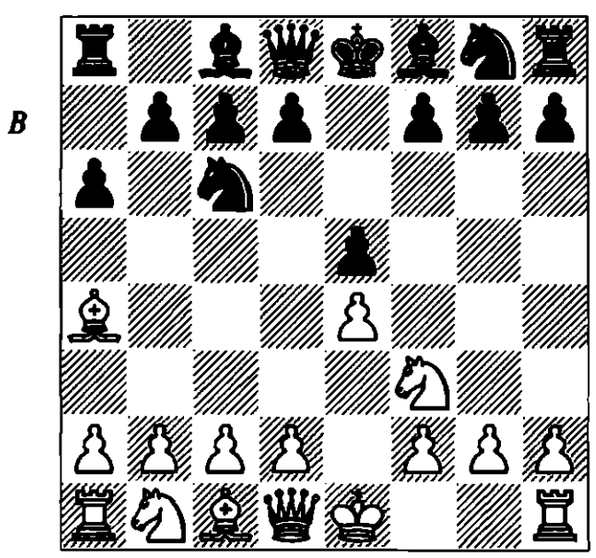
g) 3...♘ge7, the Cozio Variation, is probably better than its reputation and may be due for a revival.

This list could be extended with 3...♗b4 (the Alapin Variation), 3...♕e7 (the Vitolinš Variation), 3...a5 (the Bulgarian Variation) and even a few more 3rd-move alternatives, but we draw the line here as this is supposed to be a serious book.

4 ♗a4 *(D)*

If your database, like ours, comes up with high-level games with 4 ♗c4, you should suspect a data error – in particular if the bishop drops back to b3 after a later ...b5, transposing to standard Ruy Lopez lines.

White's only serious alternative, 4 ♗xc6, is known as the Exchange Variation. At this point we only note that it is considered relatively harmless and that White doesn't win a pawn as after 4...dxc6 5 ♘xe5 Black has a choice between 5...♕d4 and 5...♕g5. We examine 4...dxc6 and a couple of related lines in Part 4 (Chapters 8 and 9).



4...♘f6

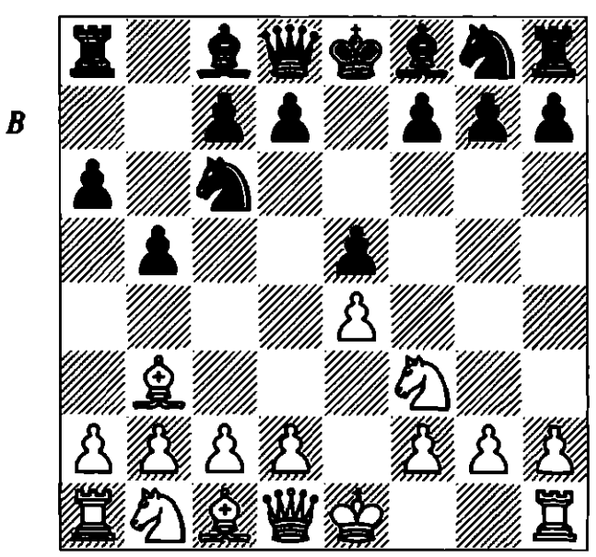
This is very clearly the main move, developing the knight with an attack on e4. The alternatives are generally considered somewhat inferior, but are potentially very dangerous for unprepared opponents:

a) 4...f5, the Zagorovsky Variation, is related to the Schliemann, but the specific variations are very different. Probably 5 d4 is critical.

b) 4...♗c5 has had a small revival recently – clearly connected to the rising popularity of the Møller and Archangelsk/Neo-Archangelsk variations (see the notes to 5...♗e7 below).

c) 4...d6, the Steinitz Deferred, has quite a few strong supporters. It may be played quietly with a quick ...♗d7 or aggressively with 5 c3 f5 (Siesta) and 5 0-0 ♗g4 6 h3 h5.

d) 4...b5 5 ♗b3 *(D)* leads to a position fundamental for understanding the Ruy Lopez. You cannot claim much expertise if you cannot tell exactly why this position is better for White than the very similar one arising from 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4. This is not at all a trivial task, and we suggest you give it some thought before you go on reading. After some consideration, we would expect that two factors come to mind. Firstly, White's bishop at b3 is less exposed to tactics (like ...♘xe4 followed by a ...d5 fork) than it is at c4 and the positionally desirable ...d5 will have less tactical force when it doesn't attack the bishop. Secondly, Black has somewhat weakened his queenside with the pawn advance to b5. We shall try to give some variations backing up these somewhat abstract claims:



d1) 5...♘a5 is the controversial Norwegian Variation. Black secures the bishop-pair at the loss of some time. For the moment it seems under a cloud. That could change, but anyway it is not very relevant for our discussion, as there is no parallel variation after 3 ♗c4.

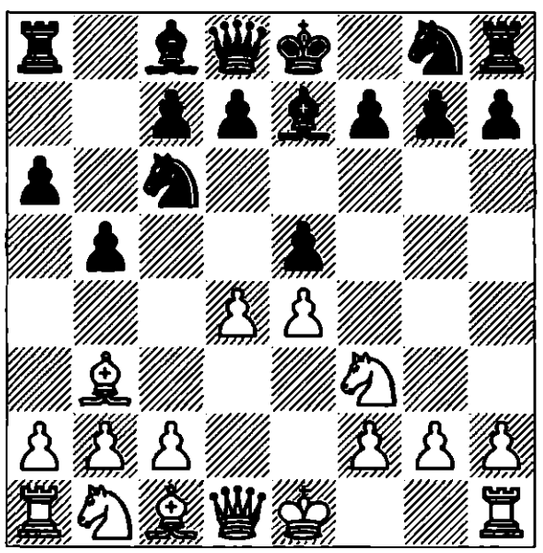
d2) We shall only discuss 5...♗c5?! briefly as it is not relevant for our ...♗e7 approach:

d21) Some very strong players have simply replied 6 0-0, allowing Black to transpose to the Møller Variation with 6...♘f6.

d22) 6 ♘xe5 is not as convincing as one might have expected after 6...♕g5!.

d23) Probably the critical line is 6 c3, immediately trying to take advantage of the exposed bishop. Then Black should avoid 6...♘f6 7 d4 exd4 8 e5, when he already has serious problems, and instead try to survive with a small centre after 6...d6 7 d4 exd4 8 cxd4 ♗b6.

d3) 5...♗e7 can be considered an attempt to reach the Closed Ruy Lopez while avoiding the Flohr and Steenwijker variations (see Chapter 9) and any unpleasant lines with ♘g5. Sometimes White simply ignores the subtlety with 6 0-0, but after 6 d4! *(D)*, results have not been encouraging for Black: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d31) There is an amazing number of (generally low-level) games with 6...exd4 7 0-0 ♘f6 8 e5 ♘e4 9 ♗d5 ♘c5 10 ♘xd4, with White scoring roughly 90%.

d32) 6...d6 seems even worse: 7 dxe5 dxe5 (7...♘xe5 8 ♘xe5 dxe5 9 ♕h5 +—) 8 ♕d5 ♕xd5 9 ♗xd5 ♗b7 10 ♘xe5 ± El Taher-Makatia, Cairo 2000.

d4) 5...♘f6 is in many ways Black's most flexible move:

d41) 6 0-0 allows Black to reach the standard Closed Ruy Lopez with 6...♗e7.

d42) 6 ♘g5 is a natural attempt to punish Black's move-order, but 6...d5 7 exd5 ♘d4 is fully satisfactory for Black.

d43) By elimination 6 d4 must be critical, and indeed we have not been able to find a completely satisfactory line for Black:

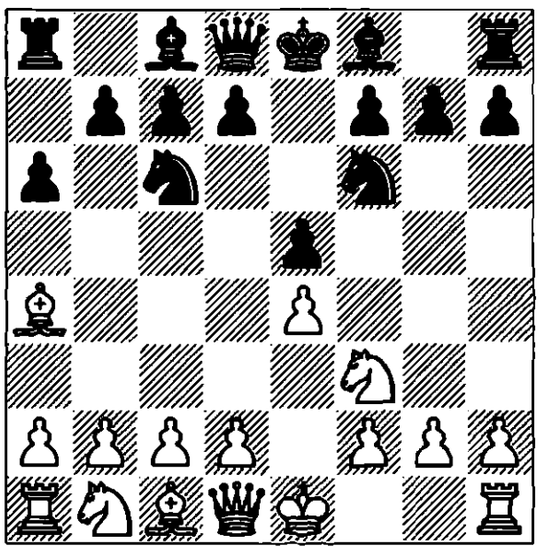
d431) 6...♘xd4 7 ♘xd4 exd4 8 e5 ♕e7 9 0-0 ±.

d432) 6...d6 7 ♘g5 d5 8 dxe5 ♘xe5 9 exd5 ±.

d433) 6...♘xe4 7 dxe5 ♘c5 8 ♗d5 ♗e7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♘c3 ♗b7 11 ♗e3 d6 (or 11...♘e6 12 ♘e4! ±) 12 ♗xc5 dxc5 13 ♗e4 ♖e8 14 ♕e2 ♕c8 15 ♖ad1 and White's positional advantage was clear in T.Ernst-J.Norri, Härnösand 1994.

d434) 6...exd4 7 e5 ♘e4 (7...♘g4 8 0-0 ♗c5 9 ♗d5 ♖b8 10 h3 is hardly better) 8 ♗d5 ♘c5 9 ♘xd4 ♗b7 10 0-0 ♘xd4 11 ♗xb7 ♘xb7 12 ♕xd4 ♘c5 13 ♕g4 ♘e6 14 ♗e3 ± Djurić-B.Meyer, Berne 1997.

We now return to 4...♘f6 *(D)*: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5 0-0

Except for the fact that it doesn't directly protect the e4-pawn, this is as natural as a move can get. Of the alternatives, 5 ♗xc6 (Flohr's Exchange Variation) can be found in Chapter 9, while others, including the tricky 5 ♕e2 and 5 d4, and the quiet 5 ♘c3 and 5 d3, are covered in Chapter 7.

5...♗e7

This is the characteristic move of the Closed Ruy Lopez, which is generally considered more solid than 5...♘xe4, the Open Ruy Lopez. Now, having blocked the e-file, Black threatens ...♘xe4. Nevertheless there is something to be said for 5...b5!?, avoiding the Steenwijker Variation (5...♗e7 6 ♗xc6) as well as the rare 5...♗e7 6 c3?!. After the forced 6 ♗b3 we have:

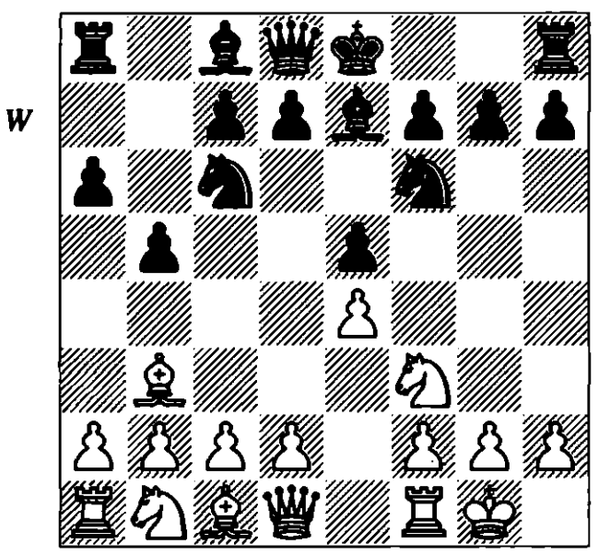
a) 6...♗b7, the Archangelsk Variation, is very sharp. It has faced some tough challenges lately but still appears in good shape.

b) 6...♗c5, the Neo-Archangelsk, has been very fashionable recently. It may lead to the same positions as the original Archangelsk, but Black's light-squared bishop can also settle on g4. Like its relative, it usually leads to very sharp struggles.

c) 6...d6!? is another path usually leading to the Closed Ruy Lopez, but Black may be looking for a chance to develop with ...g6 and ...♗g7 rather than the slightly cumbersome ...♗e7, ...0-0, ...♖e8, ...♗f8, ...g6 and ...♗g7 which we shall see in a lot of the Zaitsev main

lines. 7 ♘g5 d5 is a critical test but actually this seems fine for Black. Probably the old game Suetin-Ragozin, USSR Ch (Kiev) 1954 is still of theoretical importance: 7 c3 ♘a5 8 ♗c2 c5 9 d4! ♕c7 10 ♘bd2 g6 11 b4! cxb4 12 cxb4 ♘c6 13 ♗b2 ♗g7 14 ♖c1 0-0 15 ♗b3 ±. This falls outside the scope of our book but could be well worth looking further into if you enjoy exploring the fringes of opening theory.

d) Of more interest to us is 6...♗e7!? *(D)*. Black hopes to transpose back to well-known Closed Ruy Lopez lines having avoided a few of White's sidelines, but by doing so he gives White some new options:



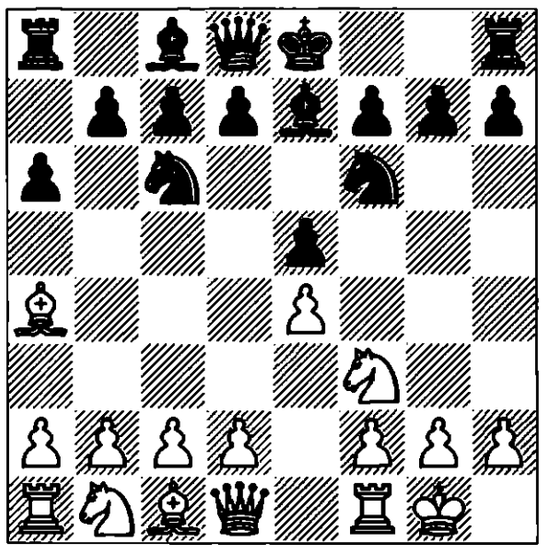
d1) The rational 7 ♖e1, leading directly back to the main lines, is White's clearly most popular choice at all levels.

d2) Logically, 7 d4!? must be the critical test and the reason most players prefer 5...♗e7 over 5...b5. It isn't terribly dangerous, but allows White to look for alternative ways of developing the f1-rook. However, it is questionable how big an achievement this is as the rook usually does a great job on e1. After 7...d6 8 c3 0-0 (8...♗g4 is also good) 9 h3 ♗b7 10 ♘bd2 ♖e8 all practical examples have transposed back to standard Zaitsev positions after a quick ♖e1 by White. The independent alternative 11 ♕e2 (planning to develop with ♖d1 instead) does not look right as the queen feels uncomfortable opposing the rook. Even 11...exd4!? 12 cxd4 ♗f8 looks plausible.

We now return to 5...♗e7 *(D)*:

6 ♖e1

By first protecting his own e-pawn, White threatens to win Black's (with ♗xc6).



Black to some extent already threatens to play ...♘xe4, so White's options are somewhat limited. Moreover, most of White's alternatives to 6 ♖e1 could have been played one move earlier, avoiding 5...♘xe4, the Open Ruy Lopez, which is a sound and fairly complicated branch of the Ruy Lopez.

Mainly for convenience we shall recommend a quick ...♗e7 against most alternatives to 5 0-0, transposing to Chapter 7 whenever possible (except for 6 ♗xc6, which is considered in Chapter 9). So from our point of view it will make little difference whether White plays 5 ♕e2 or 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♕e2; 5 d3 or 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 d3; 5 d4 or 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 d4; and 5 ♘c3 or 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♘c3. However, for White this is a fairly important decision: should he protect his e-pawn on his fifth move, eliminating the Open Variation, or on his sixth, only after Black has played the somewhat passive ...♗e7?

6 c3?! normally signals an attempt to bring the bishop directly from a4 to c2 rather than going via b3 as in the main lines. The main problem is the unprotected pawn on e4. See the introduction to Chapter 7 for details.

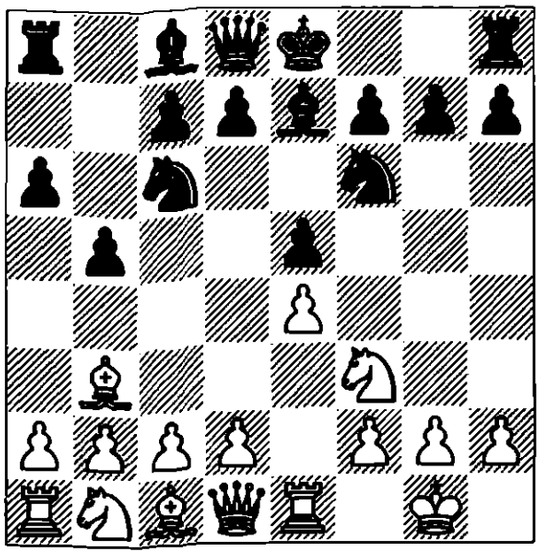
6...b5

Now that Black is ready to meet an attack against f7 with ...0-0, it is very natural to protect the pawn by breaking the pin. 6...0-0 might just be possible despite the threat to the e5-pawn, while 6...d6 is relatively safe but slightly passive.

7 ♗b3 *(D)*

7...d6

With this move, Black protects his e-pawn so that he to some extent threatens ...♘a5, which considerably reduces White's options.



a) 7...♗b7!? is Trajković's move, which nowadays Swedish GM Jonny Hector occasionally employs as a surprise weapon. The idea is to offer a gambit similar to the Marshall Attack (see line 'b' below) after 8 c3 d5!?.

b) 7...0-0 is the Marshall move-order, challenging White to play 8 c3, allowing Marshall's pawn sacrifice 8...d5!?. This is a highly theoretical line, and it would be absurd to try to cover it here. However, if we were to try to sum it up in one sentence, we would have to say that many of the lines lead to mind-boggling complications, and that it is quite possible that 'correct play' from both players tends to lead to an endgame where White's advantage is only nominal. However, that conclusion is only relevant if both players remember or find their way through some extremely heavily analysed lines. Quite a few of the main lines have been analysed in detail beyond move 30. So from White's point of view, the Marshall is a powerful reason to deviate from the main lines – if not earlier then at least after 7...0-0.

We shall only discuss it here as a feint, hoping to provoke a less than optimal set-up for White. Indeed, after 7...0-0 almost half of all games continue with some move other than 8 c3 (an 'Anti-Marshall line'), and if White accepts the challenge with 8 c3, in more than half of the games Black replies 8...d6, revealing that he was only bluffing.

So what can Black achieve with the 7...0-0 move-order (except entering the Marshall Attack), and what does he risk? Clearly if White does not reply 8 c3, then he is not threatening to create a two-abreast pawn-centre, but on the other hand his queen's knight can still develop to its most natural square. Let's have a look at the most popular 'Anti-Marshall' ideas:

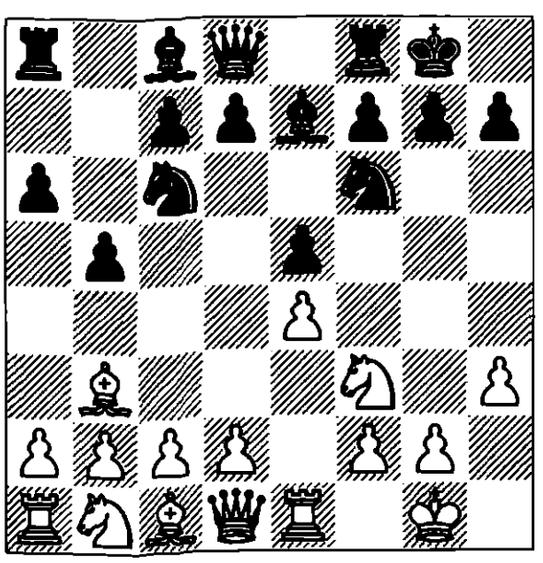
b1) 8 d4 has never had much independent value, as after 8...d6, White has nothing better than 9 c3, transposing to the line *7...d6 8 c3 0-0 9 d4* (see Lines 6A to 6D).

b2) 8 d3 should also be easily handled if you are a Marshall bluffer, as White uniformly meets 8...d6 with 9 c3, which most players already are prepared for as it frequently arises from the *7...d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3* move-order (see Line 6E), or from lines with an even earlier d3 (compare with Line 7F).

b3) 8 a3 is not a stupid move at all, but it shouldn't be a major annoyance either, as it is most likely to transpose to Suetin's line *7...d6 8 c3 0-0 9 a3* (see Line 6F) which seems to be defused by modern theory.

b4) 8 ♘c3 is a sensible move which you will very rarely meet after 7...d6, presumably because Black then can reply 8...♘a5. On the other hand it shouldn't worry you much – it is not very popular and has no very concrete tactical or strategic point.

b5) 8 h3 *(D)* is for the moment White's most popular alternative.

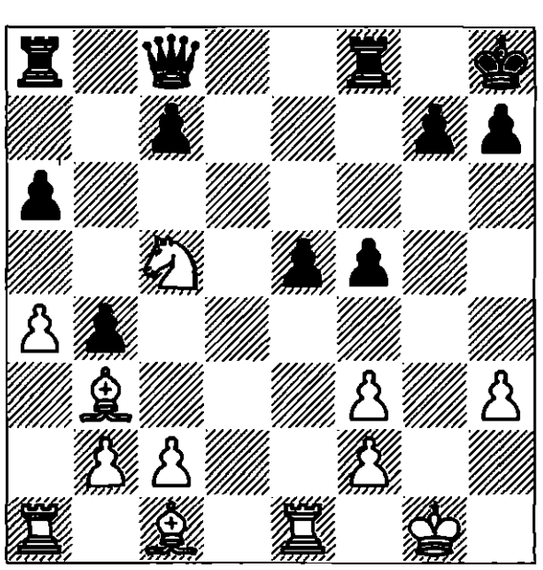


It is a logical move that points out that Black has not protected his e-pawn yet, and thus is not ready to play ...♘a5. This can hardly be a problem for us, as White will invariably meet 8...d6 with 9 c3. However, 8...♗b7 is even more tempting, meeting 9 c3 with 9...d5! and an improved Marshall. Therefore White usually plays 9 d3, followed by a quick a3 and ♘c3, which leads to positions somewhat reminiscent of those we consider in Line 7F, the Anderssen Attack. For

the moment it seems that White is able to secure an edge in these lines too, but it may well be smaller than what he can expect in the 7...d6 main lines.

b6) 8 a4 used to be the most popular Anti-Marshall line, and it still seems that if there is a problem with 7...0-0, it must be this move. Black's knight is still obliged to protect his e-pawn and he is not ready to protect his a8-rook with ...♗g4. Traditionally Black used to reply with the natural 8...♗b7, and was scoring decently. The main problem was that he had to prepare some pretty complicated lines – fair enough if he really wanted to play the gambit, but quite irritating if 7...0-0 was only meant to be a feint. Recently Black's attention – at least at grandmaster level – has turned to 8...b4. We are not sure about the objective merits of these moves (we suspect nobody is), but a practical advantage of 8...b4 is that the position arising after the customary 9 d3 d6 10 a5 is identical to the one we consider after *7...d6 8 a4 b4 9 a5 0-0 10 d3* (see Line 6G).

A recent game poses new questions regarding the Marshall move-order. Ivanchuk-Aronian, Russian Cht (Sochi) 2006 went (after 7...0-0 8 a4 b4) 9 d4!? and following 9...d6 10 dxe5 ♘xe5?! (10...dxe5!? is probably safer) 11 ♘xe5 dxe5 12 ♕f3 ♗b7 13 ♘d2 ♗c5 14 ♘f1 ♕c8 15 h3 ♔h8 16 ♘g3 ♘xe4 17 ♘xe4 f5 18 ♘xc5 ♗xf3 19 gxf3 *(D)* the following position occurred:



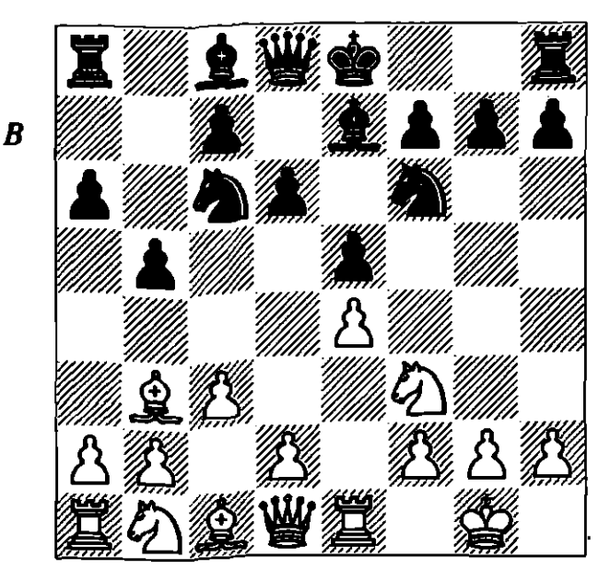
Here the three minor pieces proved superior to the queen. It is interesting that Kasparov gives the queen sacrifice his stamp of approval in *New In Chess* 4/2006, saying he had already analysed this position before his 1993 world championship match versus Nigel Short. Then he didn't quite trust the queen sacrifice for White and bailed out with 9 d3 instead, but Ivanchuk's win made him change his mind. In fact, he quotes his old trainer Alexander Nikitin who was always looking for opportunities to sacrifice his queen and used to say that "The queen is the weakest piece on the board because if she's attacked, she must run!". We expect further developments in this line.

Obviously, with the 7...d6 move-order, this particular idea doesn't work. After 8 a4 b4 9 d4, Black has the strong 9...♗g4! (see Line 6G).

That's about it, we think – not really a lot of extra preparation is required in order to add the Marshall feint. Unfortunately there may not be a lot to be gained either, if you don't play the genuine thing occasionally. Current databases contain quite a lot of information about the opening habits of even club players, and there is the possibility that your competitors are watching you! So when you have played the sequence 7...0-0 8 c3 d6 in a few games, your club mates are not likely to be bluffed any more and will prepare for an ordinary Closed Zaitsev. But of course, that's when you have finally completed your Marshall preparation and spring 8...d5!? on an unsuspecting victim!

8 c3 *(D)*

White's choice is slightly more limited here than it was after 7...0-0. Out of the moves that take ...♘a5 into account, this seems the most useful. 8 a4 and some rare alternatives are considered in Line 6G.



8...0-0

This position can also arise from *7...0-0 8 c3 d6*. The centre may soon be opened and there is little doubt that the kingside will be the only safe place for the king.

a) 8...h6, delaying castling with the hope of meeting h3 with ...g5, ...♖g8 and ...g4 (or simply transposing to the Smyslov Variation, *8...0-0 9 h3 h6*) is quite a poisonous idea. We believe we have seen analysis of it somewhere, but were unable to locate it. An alert player might decide on 9 d4, which is probably the critical test.

b) 8...♗b7 seems to be an inaccurate version of the Zaitsev as White can play 9 d4 without the preparatory h3 (the bishop is obviously not going to g4).

c) Capablanca surprisingly insisted that the ancient 8...♘a5 version of the Chigorin Variation was the most accurate move-order. Today this is rarely seen, as the reduced pressure on the centre allows White to omit the slow h3. There may still be finesses to be discovered here, and you could do worse than studying Radulsky's games in this line. However, it doesn't seem very relevant for our Zaitsev-based repertoire.

d) 8...♗g4?! is supposed to be inaccurate, as White has not yet committed himself to the big but somewhat vulnerable centre resulting from the expansion with d4. Therefore theoreticians hold that White should gain an advantage by means of d3 and ♘bd2-f1-g3 followed by h3. This is similar to some fairly popular *8 a4 ♗g4* lines, but it seems the extra move a4 doesn't really fit too well in White's quiet set-up.

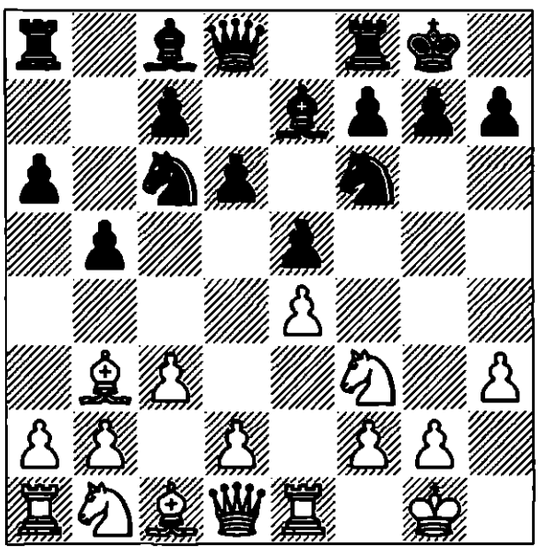
9 h3 *(D)*

Before playing d4 (which cannot be stopped anyway), White eliminates all ...♗g4 annoyances. Attempts to avoid this non-developing move include 9 d4 (Lines 6A-D), 9 d3 (Line 6E) and 9 a4 (Line 6F).

The position after 9 h3 is the real branching point of the Closed Ruy Lopez. The main decision we had to make when we started writing our book was to select the most suitable lines for Black at this point. In some ways it's a luxury of choice as Black can make his pick among several trustworthy lines:

a) 9...♗b7, the Zaitsev Variation, is currently the most popular line at top level. It can be a practical problem that White can take a draw by 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘g5 ♖f8 12 ♘f3 unless Black is willing to make some sort of compromise.

B



Nevertheless it will be our principal variation in this book.

b) 9...♘a5, the Chigorin Variation, was the traditional main line. We shall not go into any detail, but in the section 'The Chigorin Formation', you will find some additional information about this system and its characteristic pawn-formation.

c) 9...♘b8, the Breyer Variation, was the main line in the 1970s and 1980s until the virtues of the Zaitsev were fully recognized. We shall also explore this system in a schematic way in a separate section called 'The Breyer Regrouping'.

d) 9...♘d7, variously called the Keres, Karpov or Moscow Variation, is positionally well motivated and has been used in world championship matches. Black intends ...♗f6, not so much to fortify e5, but rather to apply pressure on d4, trying to force the advance d5, which we have already explained can be considered a slight concession on White's part. On the other hand, Black reduces his pressure on the e4-pawn (a major strategic motif in the Zaitsev), which is probably why it has never really caught on. Also, the bishop on f6 is a little exposed to the ♘h2-g4 manoeuvre.

e) 9...♖e8 is normally just an alternative road to the Zaitsev main line. As you will see, it can also transpose to line 'g' below. Attempts to give it independent value are considered in Line 4D.

f) 9...h6, the Smyslov Variation, was very popular in the 1960s and 1970s, and a spiritual predecessor to the Zaitsev Variation, preventing ♘g5 as a preparation for the standard kingside regrouping ...♖e8, ...♗f8, (...♔h7), ...g6

and ...♗g7. Now it is considered a little too slow, but is still a useful option if Black needs to play on and must avoid the Zaitsev repetition.

g) 9...♕d7, our alternative recommendation, comes close to being a nameless variation. It seems likely that Smyslov was the first top player to test it, quickly followed by Zaitsev. However, as both have had other lines named after them, we shall refer to it as the 'Regrouping Variation', awaiting a worthy eponymous claim. It is related to the Zaitsev and Smyslov (9...h6) variations in strategic ideas.

h) 9...♗e6 was first played by Chigorin but has sometimes been called the Kholmov Variation (or at least Kholmov's move), and frequently leads to positions somewhat untypical of the Closed Ruy Lopez.

i) 9...a5 was introduced by the Swede Stoltz but is often referred to as the Bondarevsky Variation. It appears somewhat exotic, but has experienced a small renaissance lately.

j) 9...♗d7 is extremely rare, but looks sound enough and will normally transpose to a version of the Smyslov Variation after a later ...h6.

As you can easily see, the Closed Ruy Lopez is special because it isn't really an opening variation but rather a veritable forest of related, solid lines. Consequently, if one line should prove shaky it will usually not be a great effort to change to another with similar strategic ideas. That way you will be able to utilize not only your knowledge of the side-variations leading up to the split, but also whatever general understanding you have absorbed.

Broaden Your Horizon

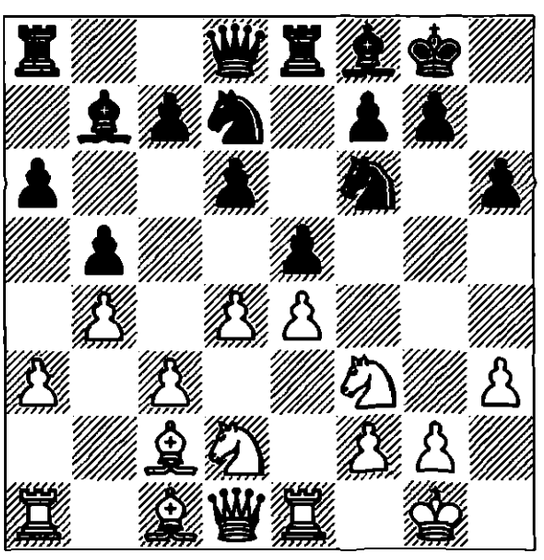
You can tell a lot about a fellow's character by his way of eating jellybeans.
RONALD REAGAN

You can never hope to master the Zaitsev without at least a basic understanding of the Chigorin and Breyer variations. The reason is straightforward: what gives the various Closed Ruy Lopez lines their distinct character is how Black solves the structural problem of his backward c-pawn which is hindered by his own knight.

The strength and the weakness of the Zaitsev, the Smyslov and what we have called the 'Regrouping System' (Chapters 4 and 5) is that they delay rather than address this fundamental question. In the Zaitsev main line, this allows Black to post his knight actively at b4, which really is a considerable success. However, in certain other lines, Black will later have to choose either a Chigorin-like or a Breyer-like approach to this matter. What you will need then may not be deep theoretical knowledge, but a general understanding of the ideas in both of these lines.

It indeed is comforting for Black to know that at his ninth move, he can choose between five major systems and some minor ones. For White, this is a major obstacle for any player who has ambitions to prepare deeply in order to secure a maximal advantage from the opening.

However, you should not be too sure that you can enforce your own favourite variation on your opponent. If your opponent surprises you with a new move or an unexpected strategy, quite frequently the correct reaction will be to adopt an idea or a set-up from a related variation. If you narrow your focus too much, you are likely to lose something in understanding. It is common knowledge that the best way to improve your intuition (which is the foundation of your decision-making process) is to study a broad variety of different chess positions.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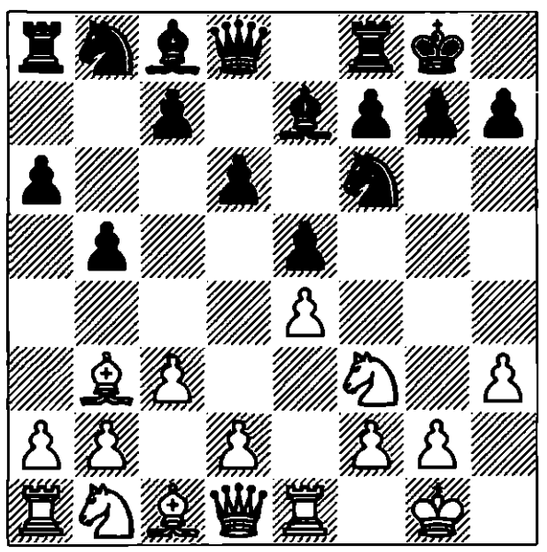
This position arises in a fairly popular line of the Zaitsev, but if you don't realize at a glance that it can also arise from the Breyer or Smyslov, you may be lacking in general Ruy Lopez education.

The Breyer Regrouping

After 1 e4, White's game is in its last throes.
GYULA BREYER

The Breyer Variation is introduced with the somewhat paradoxical move **9...♘b8** *(D)*:



This is one of the main variations of the Closed Ruy Lopez. For us it has extra significance because the ...♘b8-d7 regrouping is an important option for Black in many Zaitsev lines (but generally only after the e5-pawn is safely protected by means of .. ♖e8 and ...♗f8).

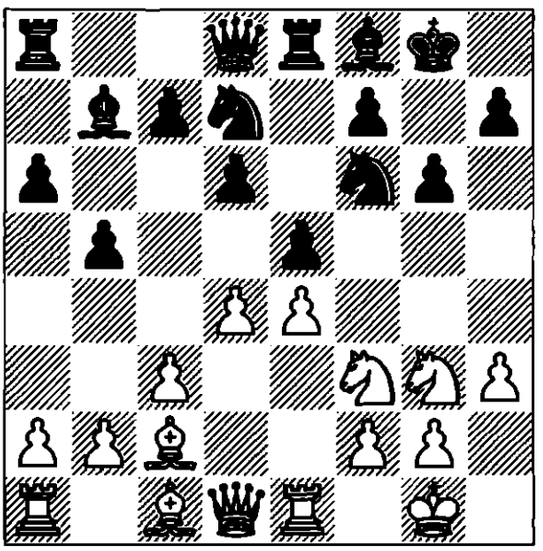
The eponymous father of the variation, the Hungarian Gyula Breyer, amazingly managed to become a leading member of the Hypermodern School of chess while generally staying faithful to a rather conservative set of chess openings. These days his brainchild has a reputation of being very solid if somewhat passive. The next few moves are normally played on autopilot by both sides:

10 d4 ♘bd7

This, of course, was Black's idea. Having seen some Chigorin examples, one could be forgiven for thinking that Black's knight retreat was also a preparation for ...c5, gaining some space in the centre. However, Black's primary plan is a hypermodern one: to apply piece pressure on White's centre with his fianchettoed bishops, hoping to provoke d5, when Black is ready to attack the centre with ...c6.

11 ♘bd2 ♗b7 12 ♗c2 ♖e8 13 ♘f1 ♗f8 14 ♘g3 g6 *(D)*

This is a kind of starting point for the variation. It's worth stopping for a minute to take



stock. What exactly has Black achieved with his knight manoeuvre? Actually, quite a lot: as if by magic Black has unblocked his c-pawn, freed the diagonal for the b7-bishop and made his minor pieces look much more harmonious.

It is worth noticing that by now Black's setup has taken on a distinct hypermodern look. The knights on d7 and f6 and the (soon-to-be) double fianchetto bishops could well have resulted from the Indian openings that were advocated by Nimzowitsch, Tartakower, Réti and other 'orthodox hypermodernists' early in the 20th century.

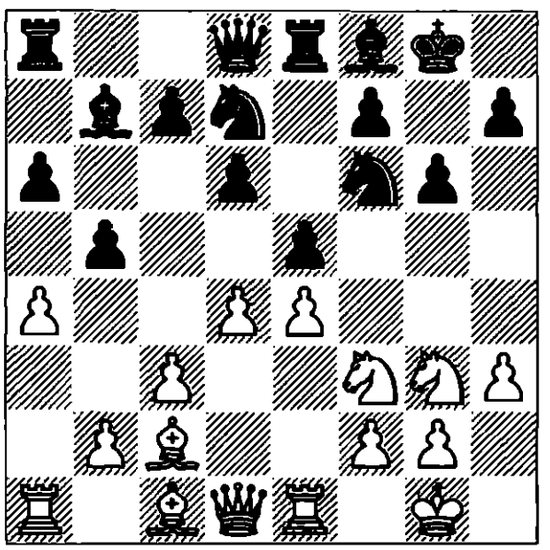
This all sounds very good for Black, but there are arguments against the regrouping as well. The most obvious one is that it costs Black two tempi, which White can use to catch up with development or gain space on the queenside and in the centre. Secondly, the resulting positions with the knight on d7, while very solid and pleasant to the eye, arguably tend to be slightly passive for Black. It is not completely obvious where he should look for counterplay once his knight reappears on d7. White too has had time to organize his camp (in particular he has managed to complete the knight hop to g3, albeit at the cost of having to put the bishop on c2), and now has a very well supported pawn-centre. Actually this is a position Black can risk losing to a stronger player without being able to pinpoint a single genuine mistake.

The above considerations are best illustrated by some examples from practical play. Basically, White has two strategies from the diagram position:

A: The Old Main Line
B: The Modern Approach

A) The Old Main Line

15 a4 *(D)*



For many decades this was the main battleground of the Breyer, with theoretical lines stretching well beyond 30 moves. Here we shall only point out the direction of play.

15...c5

An alternative is 15...♗g7, when play might develop in similar fashion to Line B after 16 d5 (it is perhaps more critical to maintain the tension a bit longer by 16 ♗d3 c6 17 ♗g5 ♘f8 18 ♕d2 ♘e6 19 ♗e3 ♘d7 20 ♗f1 ♕c7, which led to complicated play in Bologan-Harikrishna, Foros 2006) 16...♕b8 17 b3 c6 18 c4 ♕c7. A recent example is Ronchetti-Sashikiran, Turin OL 2006, which continued 19 ♗a3 ♘c5 20 ♕d2 bxc4 21 bxc4 a5 22 ♖ed1 ♗a6 with typical counterplay against the c4-pawn.

16 d5 c4 17 ♗g5 h6 18 ♗e3 ♘c5 19 ♕d2 h5 20 ♗g5 ♗e7 21 ♖a3 ♖b8?! 22 ♖ea1

White carefully prepares an invasion on the queenside.

22...♘h7 *(D)*

23 ♗e3!

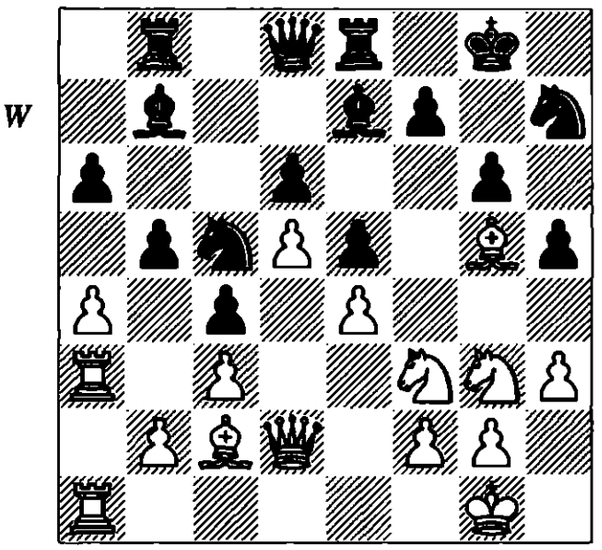
It is important for White to preserve this bishop, as it will put pressure on Black's queenside.

23...♗f6 24 ♘e2! ♘f8 25 ♘c1!

This is a model plan for White, preparing b4.

25...♘fd7 26 axb5 axb5 27 b4 cxb3 28 ♘xb3 ♕c7 29 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 30 ♕e2 ♗c8 31 ♖a7 ♕d8 32 ♖1a5

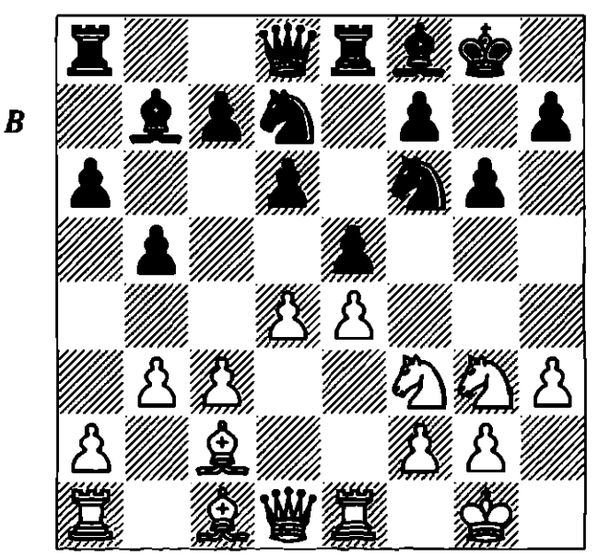
White has developed a strong initiative on the queenside and went on to win in Topalov-Van der Sterren, Antwerp 1997. Later, however, Black started to find defensive ideas in



this variation and it slowly went out of fashion. One obvious improvement is 21...♘fd7 22 ♗e3 ♕c7 23 ♖ea1 (23 ♘g5 is met by 23...♗f6 taking control of the e5-square in case of f4) 23...♘b6 24 axb5 axb5 and Black's task will be considerably eased with all the rooks gone.

B) The Modern Approach

15 b3!? *(D)*



This approach gained in popularity when Black started to find ways to cope with 15 a4. White plans to expand in the centre with d5, supported by a pawn on c4.

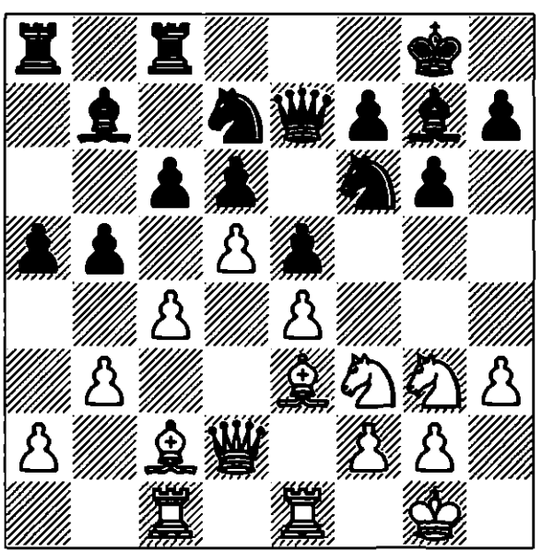
15...♗g7

The alternative is 15...c6, preventing the plan mentioned above, but obviously Black is not eager to hamper his own bishop in this way. Carlsen-Shirov, Drammen 2004/5 continued 16 ♗g5 ♗g7 (of course 16...h6 17 ♗e3 is possible, but then White can win a tempo with ♕d2 later) 17 ♕d2 ♕c7 18 a4 (18 ♗h6!?) 18...d5 (this

attempt to liberate Black's position doesn't quite work, but 18...♘f8 19 b4 intending ♗b3 is also comfortably better for White) 19 dxe5 ♘xe5 (or 19...♘xe4 20 ♗xe4! dxe4 21 ♘xe4 ♘xe5 22 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 23 ♘f6+ with a crushing attack for White) 20 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 21 ♗f4!? ♕e6 22 e5 ♘d7 23 ♗h6 ♗h8 24 f4 ♕e7 25 ♖e3 (threatening ♘f5!) 25...♘f8 and here Magnus gave 26 b4!, stopping all counterplay with a distinct plus for White.

16 d5 ♕e7 17 c4 c6 18 ♗e3 ♖ec8 19 ♖c1 a5 20 ♕d2 *(D)*

B



Black's position is solid, but it is not evident what he should do next. Ideally he would install a knight on c5 with ...♘c5 and ...♘fd7, and then capture once on c4 and apply pressure on the white pawn with ...♗a6 (and even ...♘b6), with fine counterplay. However, in this exact position it is difficult for Black to achieve his dreams.

20...bxc4

20...♘c5! has been suggested as an improvement, not fearing 21 ♗xc5 dxc5 22 dxc6 ♗xc6 23 cxb5 ♗xb5 24 a4 ♗c6 25 ♗d3 ♘d7 26 ♘f1 ♖cb8 27 ♖c3 ♖b4 28 ♘e3 ♔h8 29 ♘c4 ♘f8 30 ♗c2 f6, when Black had equality in Efimenko-Socko, Hastings 2005.

21 bxc4 cxd5

This rids White of his weak c-pawn, but neither 21...♗a6 22 ♗a4! nor 21...♘c5 22 ♗xc5 dxc5 23 ♕g5! (with the point that 23...♖e8? fails to 24 ♗a4!) inspires much confidence either.

22 cxd5 ♘c5 23 ♗d3!

An excellent move, transferring the bishop to its 'lawful' diagonal. White has a comfortable edge. In Leko-Short, Wijk aan Zee 2005 things quickly went downhill for Black from here. Of course, he can take the bishop, but after 23...♘xd3 24 ♖xc8+! ♖xc8 25 ♕xd3 followed by ♕a3 the a5-pawn is doomed in the long run.

Conclusion:

If you consider employing the Breyer regrouping in a quiet Zaitsev line, you should ask yourself at least three questions:

1) Is there a tactical problem (take an extra look at the f7-square and for any unprotected pieces)?

2) Are the resulting positions favourable compared to the main Breyer lines?

3) Is this a direct transposition into the Breyer?

We hope this short introduction will help you answer the last two questions. None of them are very easy to answer unless you are a Breyer expert (and this chapter will not make you one), but you may get an indication if you check whether White has had the time to support his centre with the ♘f1-hop.

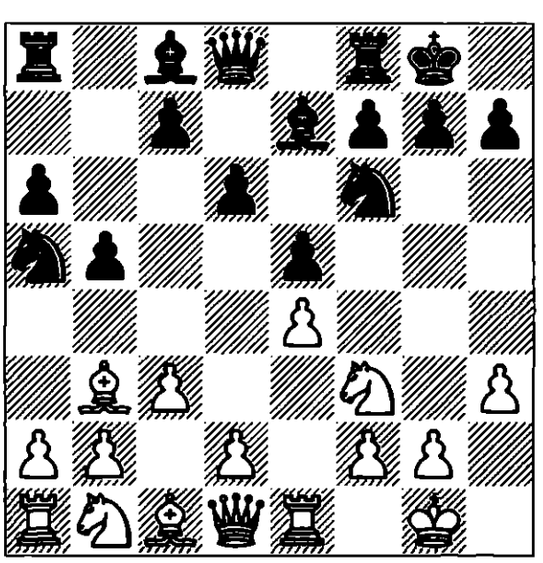
The Chigorin Formation

In general, the game of chess is much richer than is to be gathered from the existing theory, which endeavours to compress it within definite, narrow bounds.

MIKHAIL CHIGORIN

The Chigorin Variation is initiated by the move **9...♘a5** *(D)* (although Chigorin himself and most of his contemporaries frequently played it one move earlier):

W



Originally the Chigorin wasn't a major branch of the Closed Ruy Lopez at all – it *was* the Closed Ruy Lopez and the alternatives were just deviations. Black's knight move gains time on White's light-squared bishop for the central expansion ...c5 and makes a very natural impression. The variation is named after Mikhail Chigorin, the first Russian grandmaster.

For us the Chigorin Variation is of interest mainly because the move ...♘a5 followed by ...c5 is an important resource for Black in some of the quieter Zaitsev variations. The next few moves are more or less obligatory:

10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4

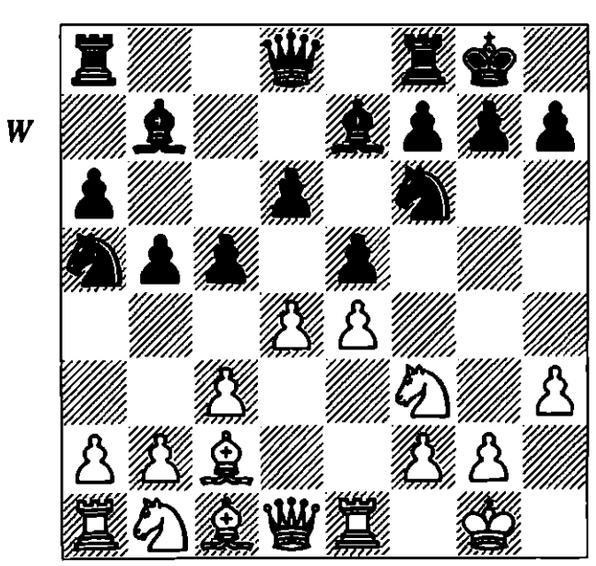
After more than a century of grandmaster practice, the theory on this position has expanded to the extent that it hardly can be treated as a single system any longer, but rather has to be broken down into several subsystems. The main three are these:

A: 11...♗b7 (Romanishin Variation)
B: 11...♘d7 (Keres Variation)
C: 11...♕c7 (Classical Variation)

In addition there are Borisenko's 11...♘c6 and I.Sokolov's favourite 11...cxd4 12 cxd4 ♗b7, both very playable at grandmaster level, and a few less recognized ones. Indeed, the number of playable options for Black at almost any turn is a clear testimony to the great solidity of the Chigorin.

A) The Romanishin Variation

11...♗b7!? *(D)*



This system may be of special interest for Zaitsev players as this is where your bishop will usually be if you decide that ...♘a5 followed by ...c5 is the way to free your position.

One of White's main decisions in this line is whether to close the centre with an early d5 or to keep the position fluid. The presence of the black bishop on b7 obviously makes d5 a far more tempting thrust for White than when it was still on its initial square. In fact, the bishop quite frequently has to return to c8 in order to find activity if White advances in the centre.

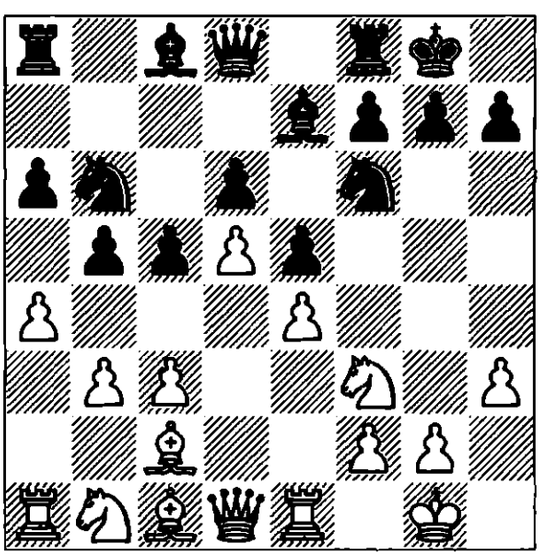
12 d5

According to contemporary theory, this is the most challenging continuation. After the alternative 12 ♘bd2, a plausible continuation is 12...cxd4 13 cxd4 exd4 14 ♘xd4 ♖e8 15 ♘f1 ♗f8 16 ♘g3 g6 17 b3 and now the typical 17...d5! 18 e5 ♘e4; e.g., 19 ♘xe4 dxe4 20 ♗xe4 ♖xe5 21 ♗xb7 ♖xe1+ 22 ♕xe1 ♘xb7 23 ♗b2 ♕e8 with a quick draw in Joh.Fernandez-Kosashvili, Curaçao 2002.

12...♘c4

Otherwise the knight might be permanently stuck on the rim after b3.

13 b3 ♘b6 14 a4 ♗c8 *(D)*



This retreat doesn't signal the complete failure of Black's plan – on b7 the bishop provoked White to close the centre.

15 ♗e3

Khalifman makes a strong case for this non-stereotypical move, activating the bishop on a nice square before developing the knight in traditional fashion with ♘bd2, etc. Black has fewer problems demonstrating comfortable play after 15 ♘bd2; e.g., 15...g6 16 ♘f1 bxa4 17 bxa4 a5 18 ♘e3 ♗a6 19 ♘h2 ♖b8 20 ♖b1 ♔h8 21 ♕f3 ♘g8 22 g3 ♕d7 23 h4 ♘xa4 24 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 25

♘eg4 f6 26 h5 g5 ∓ Zamostni-Romanishin, Pula 1994.

15...♕c7

Later Romanishin came up with the improvement 15...bxa4 16 bxa4 ♘c4 17 ♗c1 ♘a5, securing some counterplay on the queenside.

16 ♘bd2 g6 17 ♕e2 ♗d7 18 a5! ♘c8 19 ♘f1 ♘h5 20 b4!

A typical procedure; if Black plays ...c4, White has a very favourable structure on the queenside and can focus completely on the other flank.

20...♗f6 21 ♕d2 ♗g7 22 ♘g3 ♘f4

The knight is Black's only trump at the moment, so it's natural to try to preserve it.

23 ♖ac1 ♕d8 24 ♗xf4 exf4 25 ♕xf4 ♗xc3 26 bxc5! f6 27 c6 ♗e8 28 ♖ed1 ♕xa5 29 ♘d4 ♗b2 30 ♖b1 ♗xd4 31 ♖xd4 ♕c3 32 ♕d2 ♕xd2 33 ♖xd2

± Khalifman-Romanishin, Belgrade 1993.

B) The Keres Variation

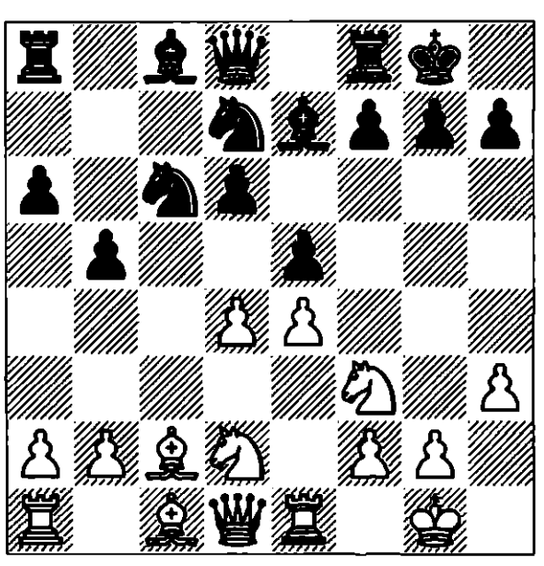
11...♘d7

This protects the e5-pawn and frees the f6-square for Black's bishop.

12 ♘bd2 cxd4

This is the traditional choice. 12...exd4!? 13 cxd4 ♘c6, initiating sharp counterplay in the centre, is called the Graf Variation. After 14 d5 ♘ce5 15 ♘xe5 (15 a4!? might be the move that breaks Black's defence) 15...♘xe5 16 f4 ♘g6 17 ♘f3, both 17...f5!? and 17...♗h4 18 ♘xh4 ♕xh4 lead to unclear complications, the result of which falls outside the scope of this book.

13 cxd4 ♘c6 *(D)*

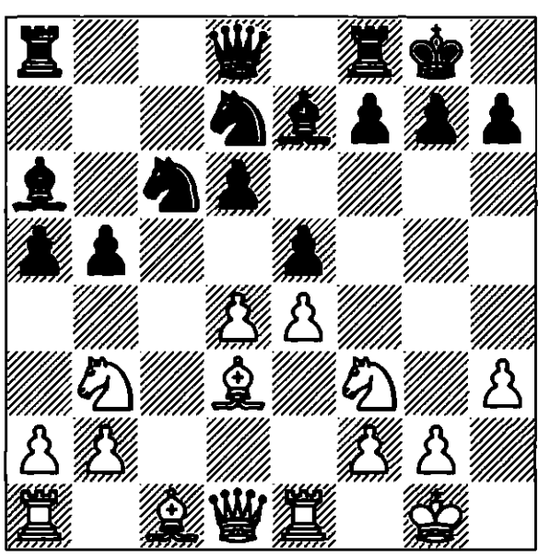


14 ♘b3

A surprising change of direction! Wasn't this knight going to g3? Here is Khalifman's comment: "The knight is diverted from its main Spanish task – to attack the enemy king. The reason is that the concrete situation requires the presence of this piece on the queenside! And the attacking mission could be accomplished later too – such a development of events is not improbable."

14...a5 15 ♗d3 ♗a6 *(D)*

Maybe 15...a4 16 ♗xb5 ♕b6 17 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 18 ♘bd2 ♗f6 is a better try, with definite compensation for the pawn. This is another Romanishin speciality.



16 d5 ♘b4 17 ♗f1 a4

And now a well-known trick:

18 ♘bd4! exd4 19 a3

White has a positional advantage. See for example Anand-Piket, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

C) Classical Chigorin

11...♕c7

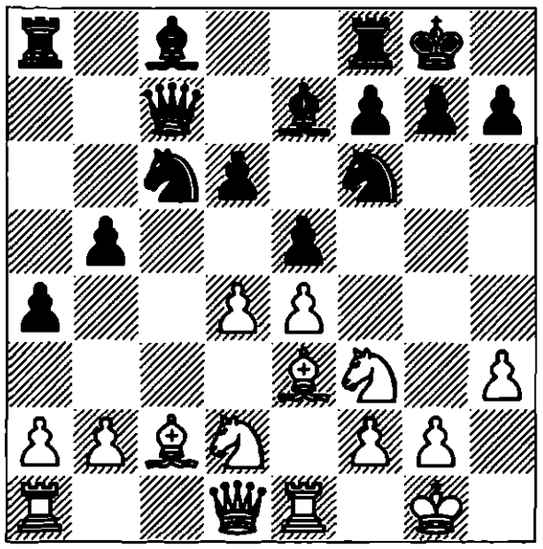
This is the venerable main line introduced by Chigorin himself. Black supports his centre and frees his back rank.

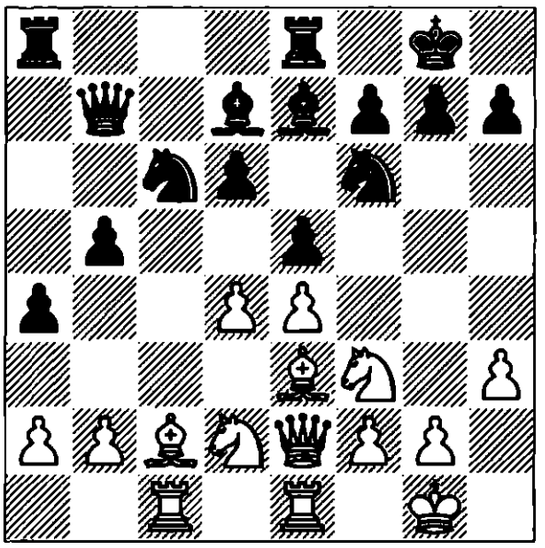
12 ♘bd2 cxd4 13 cxd4 ♘c6

This is the modern favourite, but almost every imaginable move has been tested here. An old game continued 13...♗d7 (this has recently been played by Short and Korchnoi) 14 ♘f1 ♘c6 15 ♗e3 ♘b4 16 ♗b1 ♖fc8 17 ♕d2 d5, when White secured a small advantage with the cool 18 ♘g3! in Schlechter-Chigorin, Ostend 1907.

14 ♘b3 a5 15 ♗e3 a4 16 ♘bd2 *(D)*

16...♗d7





16...♘b4 is an alternative. In this popular position one of the main lines runs:

17 ♖c1 ♕b7

From now on ...♗d8-b6 is part of Black's plans.

18 ♕e2 ♖fe8 *(D)*

White may have a very small edge:

a) 19 ♗d3 ♖ab8 20 dxe5 ♘xe5 21 ♘xe5 dxe5 22 ♗c5 ♗c6 23 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 24 ♘f3 h6 25 ♖c5 ♘d7 26 ♖c3 ♖e6 27 ♖ec1 ♖d8 28 ♕c2 ♘f6 29 ♘xe5 ♗xe4 = Kramnik-Adams, Sofia 2005.

b) 19 a3 g6 (certainly not Black's only move at this juncture) 20 ♗b1 ♗f8 21 ♗a2 h6 22 dxe5 ♘xe5 (22...dxe5 23 ♗c5 ±) 23 ♗d4 ♖ac8 24 ♗c3 ♗g7 25 ♘d4 ♕b6 26 ♖cd1 ♕a6 27 f4 ♘c4 28 ♘xc4 bxc4 29 ♕f3 with a stable advantage for White in Dolmatov-Agdestein, Tilburg 1993. Simen was very impressed by Dolmatov's handling of the position.

Conclusion:

You are not likely to transpose directly to the Chigorin from the Zaitsev. However, in cases where White has less direct pressure on the centre – in particular e5 (e.g. in the d3 lines) – you may be tempted by the sequence ...♘a5 and ...c5 to increase your central control. Also after a d5 advance from White, you need to choose a retreat-square for the c6-knight – sometimes a5 may be the best bet. We hope this short introduction will be useful when pondering such matters. The option to draw on knowledge from the normal Chigorin positions and make a comparison with those will facilitate your decision process.

Part 2: The Main Battleground

Tabiyas

In his book Al-Lajlaj analysed some tabiya in detail. He started his analysis from some given opening, for example 'Double Mujannah' or 'Mujannah-Mashaikhi', and then continued up to move 40, giving numerous variations.
WIKIPEDIA ON SHATRANJ

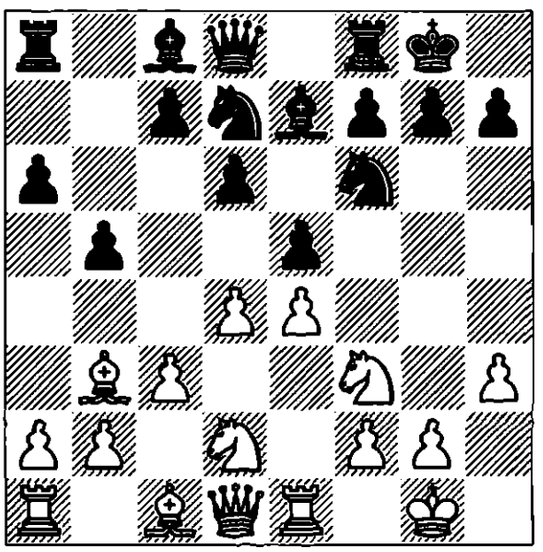
The old Indian version of chess – Shatranj – was more sedate than the modern version, and it took the armies quite a few moves to get into full battle. Therefore the players quite frequently started their games from a fairly quiet, possibly pre-agreed, position, where the armies were ready to engage in close combat. Such a set-up was called a tabiya. Many authors have pointed out the similarities between the ancient tabiyas and certain modern opening variations which many strong players head for with almost religious trust.

We believe the most constructive way to bring order into the Ruy Lopez wilderness is to pick a principal position and consider it the 'tabiya' of your opening variation. For this position you should develop a feeling of not only expertise but also of ownership and personal devotion. Then, hopefully, the moves leading up to 'your' tabiya as well as the variations branching out from it, will become a part of a meaningful whole.

This 'tabiya approach' should of course be carried out with sense and not degenerate into sleep-walker chess. If your opponent chooses what seems to be an alternative route to the desired position, you should be very alert as he may well be preparing a trap or a blunder. Consider the position after 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘b8 10 d4 ♘bd7 11 ♘bd2 *(D)*.

Now several grandmaster games have arrived at the Breyer position normally reached by 11...♗b7 12 ♗c2 ♖e8 13 ♘f1 ♗f8 14 ♘g3

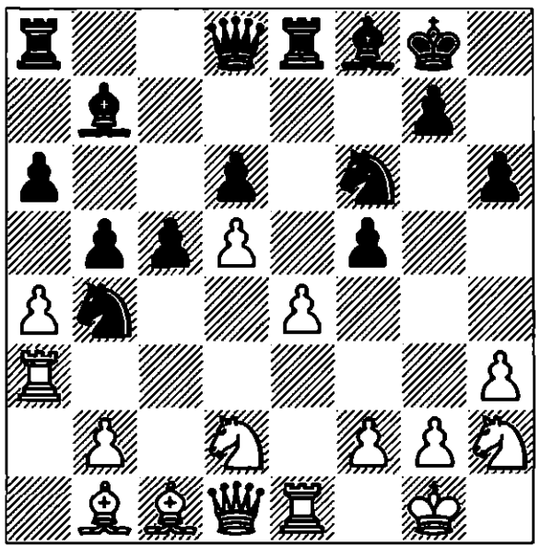
B



g6 via the less common move-order 11...♖e8?? 12 ♘f1?? ♗b7 13 ♗c2, etc. while others have gone for the repetition 12 ♘g5?? ♖f8 13 ♘gf3 ♖e8?? 14 ♘g5??. Unless these are pre-arranged draws, deviously designed to lure naïve database users into a well-known trap, they demonstrate the dangers of heading blindly for your desired set-up. 12 ♗xf7+! decides the game immediately.

The basic position with which we concluded our Ruy Lopez overview is sometimes referred to as 'the Closed Ruy Lopez tabiya', and indeed it has one more feature in common with the ancient tabiyas: there have been no exchanges. However, that mainly makes sense from White's perspective as it is the point where Black makes his fundamental choice. Therefore in this book we shall consider the position on the following page our basic 'tabiya'.

There really should be no need to justify that choice. The Zaitsev is a well-established main line, which has been tested repeatedly at world championship level, and this is the most popular branch. MegaBase 2006 contains 46 games with this position – most of them between strong and well-prepared players. Just as importantly, Correspondence Database 2006 contains 105 games – most of them between serious players with plenty of time and a fast computer available.



It may feel weird – even scary – to start your theoretical education by examining a complicated position arising at move 18. However, let's forget for a moment that this is a key position in the highly theoretical Zaitsev Variation. Let us also forget all worries about how to remember the moves leading up to this position. Let us just consider it as the interesting middlegame position it actually is and find out what is going on. Wouldn't it be comforting if it turned out that it's possible to identify the main continuations by applying common sense and a little calculation?

Normally a strong player will do the following evaluation on a relatively subconscious level, based on memories of earlier encounters with this or similar positions and quickly switch to concrete analysis. However, on a more conscious level this may be done along the lines suggested by Silman in his *Reassess Your Chess* or Dorfman in *The Method in Chess*. So let's make a list of static and dynamic positional elements and try to rank them in order of importance:

- **Material** for the moment is equal, all the way down to the pairs of minor pieces. Only a pair of pawns has been exchanged so far, making the position unusually rich in possibilities.
- Black has slightly weakened his **king position** – in particular his light squares – with ...h6 and ...f5. The fact that his light-squared bishop is far from the defence of his kingside while the b1-bishop has a precise aim at g6 and h7 is a further cause of worry. Although we must conclude that both sides have fairly healthy king positions, there is no doubt that Black has to show more care – not only looking out for short-term tactics but also for a long-term invasion.
- The **pawn-structure** is fairly unstable with both sides having a number of exchanges, thrusts and breaks available. This is partly a result of Black's 17th move (17...f5). Still, there are a few aspects likely to be fairly permanent. On the queenside Black has established a mobile pawn-majority of three versus two. Correspondingly White has a kingside majority. We can assume that this tendency will become even more pronounced in the near future, as White's d-pawn is exposed and likely to drop after his e-pawn has captured or been exchanged for Black's f-pawn.
- Let's then have a look at **ranks, files and diagonals** before we move to other aspects of piece activity. We have already noted that White dominates the b1-h7 diagonal, which can be of vital importance. For the moment the c1-h6 diagonal appears to be less significant, but should White's kingside initiative turn into something concrete, his control over that diagonal may prove decisive. There are no fully open lines for the moment but that can change at any moment as both the a-file and the e-file can quickly be cleared of pawns. However, both players have obviously taken this into account, and are ready to neutralize any attempts to conquer these files. More peculiar with so many pieces remaining on the board, is the importance of an open rank, namely the 3rd rank where White's rook is displaying a remarkable agility. This is an example of what Watson has dubbed a 'swinging rook', and brings us to a closely related subject...
- **Piece activity**: it takes just a glance to determine that both sides have more or less completed their development and consequently have reasonably active pieces. Admittedly both sides have their queen and a bishop on their original squares, but these pieces are all doing a fine job. Black's dark-squared bishop has mainly got defensive duties but there are no obvious problem pieces nor any extraordinarily strong pieces. There are no obvious central outposts for the knights and consequently there is every reason to expect the bishops to be somewhat stronger than the knights.

It is not at all easy to weigh all these factors against each other. It seems likely that the struggle will revolve around Black's queenside pawn-majority and White's attacking prospects on the kingside. This is about as far as an abstract consideration of the position will get you. Which side you initially prefer may reflect your general style of play or what your instincts tell you about the relative importance of these two aspects. The essence of the above discussion is that the position has become highly unbalanced and that the two armies are now ready for close combat – so all real conclusions must result from an examination of the concrete variations.

1 The Zaitsev Main Line

A statistician is a person who stands with his feet in a bucket of ice water, sticks his head in an oven and says: "on average I feel fine!".
K. DUNNIGAN

The Zaitsev Variation is among Black's most respected Ruy Lopez lines at GM-level. Unlike some of the competing main lines it generally leads to sharp positions where Black generates counter-chances rather than seeking slow equality through simplification. With some justification it can be described as a Smyslov Variation on steroids. Black saves the move ...h6 in order to apply pressure on White's centre as quickly as possible.

Most texts on the variation will point out that the Zaitsev has one major drawback which contrasts sharply with its general fighting qualities: it allows White to force an immediate draw (unless Black is willing to transpose to another variation). At this point we just want to state that we feel this problem has been exaggerated. A draw by repetition is after all not such a grim fate for Black, and if he really wants to, Black is certainly able to play on. We shall explore this subject in Chapters 3 and 4.

Theory books date quickly in the modern chess environment. The professional player must use an up-to-date database and put in some serious work comparing the book's content with recent grandmaster practice. We therefore expect many of our readers to do likewise and use an analysis engine and a game database when working their way through this book. Examining recent grandmaster praxis is certainly indispensable for the serious student, and we definitely encourage this. However, the statistical functions of the database must be used with caution. Trying to base a repertoire on the statistics of a chess database is a dubious undertaking no matter how huge, recent and well-organized it is. Even if you succeed in eliminating the games of the weakest players, there still are massive problems. The main two are these:

- The correlation between the outcome of the opening struggle and the final result of the game is rather weak – in particular in rapid and amateur games.
- The refutation of a line may be represented by one single game, heavily outnumbered by older games where it succeeded due to incorrect handling by the opponents.

Only when you know the specifics of a line fairly well, can you make sensible use of the database statistics. The Zaitsev drawing line has two really significant effects on the statistics. Firstly, there is the fact that Black will usually avoid the line if he is clearly the stronger player, and needs to win. Secondly, a huge number of games where Black is slightly the stronger player end with a draw around move 12 (see Chapter 4 for more on this). That means that in the games that go on, the results might be distorted as there will be a relatively higher number of games where White is the stronger player. The net effect of these two factors is that in most full Zaitsev games, the players will either be of similar strength, or White will be clearly the stronger player. This will of course influence the statistics.

Zaitsev Overview

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3)

For the moves up to here, see the Ruy Lopez Overview in Part 1. For the next few moves, until we reach our standard position, we shall only give very brief comments, justifying the moves somewhat without going into any details. Analytical support will follow as we first explore and then backtrack from the principal position in the following sub-chapters.

9...♗b7!

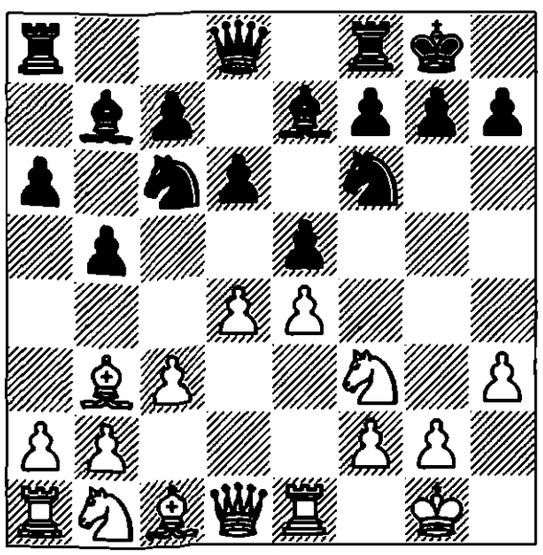
According to Mednis this is the move a man from Mars, reasonably schooled in basic opening principles and generally a good chessplayer, would suggest. We may never find out if

Mednis was right, but certainly a lot of very strong earthlings have played the move. 9...♖e8 is normally an alternative route to the Zaitsev. It does, however, have some independent significance and the differences are discussed in Line 4D.

10 d4 *(D)*

10 d3 leads to a position which can arise from various move-orders (among others an Anti-Marshall line) but which we examine under *9 d3 ♗b7* in Line 6E, the Pilnik Variation. Rarer options are discussed in Line 3D.

B



10...♖e8!

Actually this move was Igor Zaitsev's real discovery. The reason it was never played until 1975 is probably mostly psychological: allowing White a repetition certainly feels like a slight concession. However, from a theoretical perspective a quick draw with Black is quite a success.

11 ♘bd2

11 ♘g5 forces 11...♖f8. It may be a draw offer or a psychological feint and is discussed in Chapter 4. 11 a4 and some minor alternatives are discussed in Line 3D.

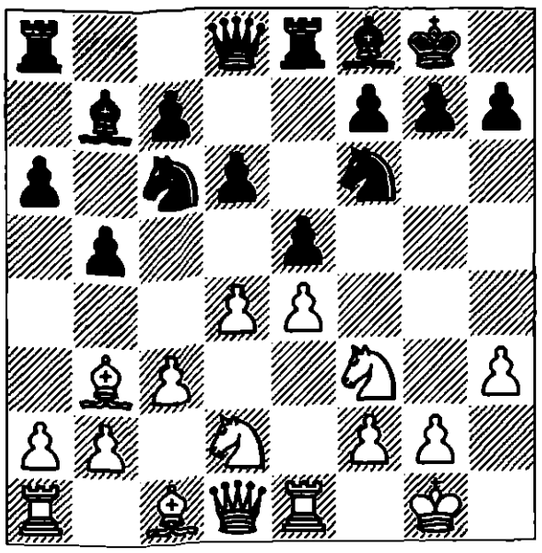
11...♗f8 *(D)*

When at move 9 Fritz slightly prefers 9...♘a5 over 9...♗b7, it seems due to its inability to appreciate this move. However, it is really the only consistent follow-up to ...♖e8. Now there is some real pressure against White's e-pawn, and the bishop can be activated with ...g6 and ...♗g7.

12 a4

This is the cutting edge of the Zaitsev Variation, and the subject of our first chapter. White

W



logically activates his queen's rook while attacking the weakness at b5, but the move also visibly weakens b4, which Black exploits in the main line. 12 d5 (Line 3A), 12 a3 (Line 3B) and 12 ♗c2 (Line 3C) are also very respected moves. It seems that 12 ♘g5 ♖e7 (also 3C) is considered completely innocuous, but our analysis hints that it deserves some attention.

12...h6

Superficially the position is now reminiscent of the Smyslov Variation (9...h6) but there is a major difference. By delaying ...h6, Black has generated quicker counterplay against e4, thereby making it harder for White to complete the standard knight manoeuvre to f1.

There has been some controversy whether this move really is necessary. Some very strong players have tried 12...♕d7 with reasonable results. This is a very convenient extra line to add to your repertoire as it can also occur from the line 9...♕d7. See the move-order *9...♕d7!? 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 ♗b7* in Line 5C for analysis. However, there can hardly be any real threats to e4 as long as White has the move ♘g5.

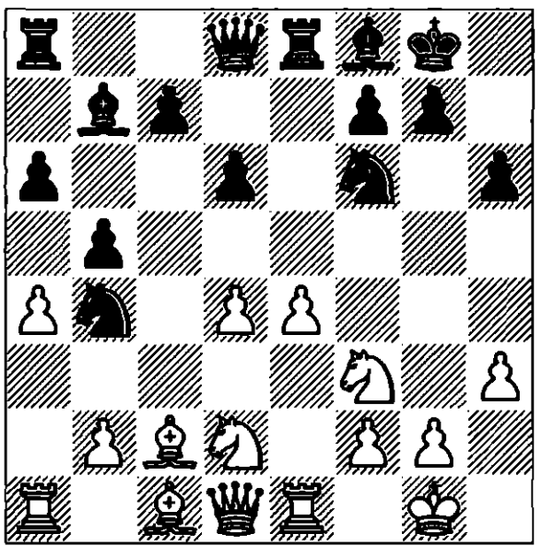
13 ♗c2

Protecting e4 with the bishop is logical now that Black has spent a move protecting f7.

13...exd4

This central exchange is the main line and very likely best. You should, however, realize that it contains a considerable strategic risk: White is left with a perfect pawn duo in the centre. It is therefore a move Black should only play when he is absolutely certain that he will have real pressure on White's centre. That is indeed the case here. In addition his problem knight gains a nice square.

14 cxd4 ♘b4 *(D)*



The knight can hardly be driven away from b4 and is certainly quite annoying for White on this square. Compared to the Chigorin redeployment to a5 or the Breyer undevelopment to b8, it seems a considerable improvement.

15 ♗b1

The light-squared bishop usually is worth preserving, even if the centre pawns have been blocked on light squares. Here, where the pawns are mobile, it would be a crime to give it up for a knight – even a well-placed one. In some lines White will have to work quite hard to reactivate this bishop but usually it will eventually emerge as a powerful piece.

15...c5

Black mobilizes his queenside majority and attacks White's centre before White has fully coordinated his pieces. The backward d-pawn may cause some difficulties in the long term, but for the moment isn't easy to attack. 15...♕d7 is a safe alternative which again underlines the connection to the 9...♕d7 variation. See Line 1F for details on the transposition to Line 5B.

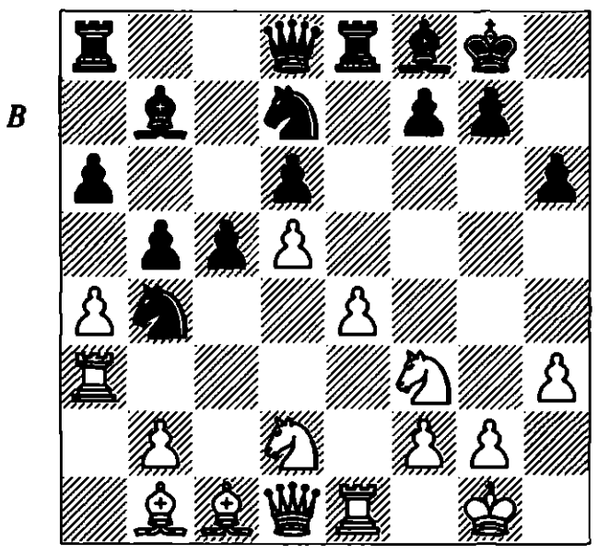
16 d5

It is possible to delay or avoid this advance, but usually that will allow Black to solve all his structural problems by playing ...d5 (after a preliminary exchange on d4). See Line 1F for details.

16...♘d7!

This multi-purpose move has both defensive and offensive missions: in combination with ...g6 and ...♗g7, it exerts maximum influence on the e5-square, making a white pawn-break there extremely hard to achieve. In the offensive department it firstly frees the f-pawn, allowing Black to undermine the spearhead of the white pawn-centre, namely the d5-pawn, with ...f5. Secondly it opens the way for the plan of ...c4 followed by ...♘c5 and occupation of the weakened d3-square, deep behind enemy lines.

17 ♖a3 *(D)*



This may look a little peculiar at first, but opening the a-file is quite likely to help Black's play on the queenside and obviously there is little hope of activity for the rook along the first rank. In contrast, the third rank presents the rook with a fairly open view to the kingside – in particular after White's planned ♘h2.

Just before the Turin Olympiad 2006, the Norwegian national team had a training session with Mark Dvoretsky. One of his lessons was on the subject of open files. Everyone knows that rooks belong on open files, but as Dvoretsky pointed out it's easy to forget that this rule is also valid for open ranks!

17...f5!?

The text-move will most likely lead to an exchange of Black's f-pawn for White's d-pawn. This – at least in an abstract sense – should benefit Black as he will strengthen his central influence. As compensation White will get certain attacking possibilities against the weakened black kingside. This sets the pace for the struggle ahead. Generally the play will now become very sharp. If Black prefers a different type of game, he can try 17...c4, which is considered in Lines 2A and 2B. Even though it has been played by strong players and looks reasonable enough, we shall not examine 17...g6, as after

18 ♘h2 ♗g7 19 ♘df3 it seems that White's kingside attack comes just a bit too quickly.

18 ♘h2

This is Khalifman's move, which he introduced against Karpov in Reggio Emilia in 1992. It is still considered White's most dangerous option here, the obvious point being the lateral transfer of the a3-rook to the kingside. Furthermore it seems almost inevitable that Black's f-pawn will be exchanged, after which g4 will be a very active square for the knight.

18...♘f6 *(D)*

White's last move released his control over e5, so Black decides that his knight can again be put to better use here, increasing the pressure on e4 and d5 and to some extent neutralizing White's ♘g4 plan. It is not at all unlikely that the moves up to here represent best play for both sides after 1 e4 e5 – the Open Games main line if you like. It also happens to be our 'tabiya'.

Black has also tried 18...♔h8?!, which has scored poorly and probably is too slow, 18...c4 and 18...♕e7 (see Leif's Preface).

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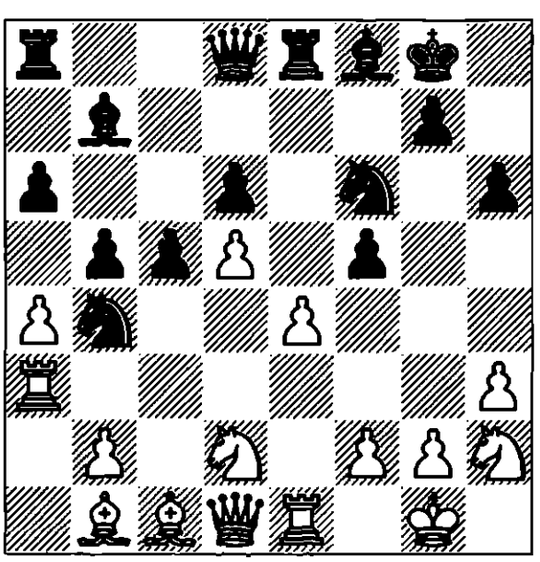


Chapter Guide

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 (12...h6 13 ♗c2 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 ♘d7 17 ♖a3 f5 18 ♘h2 ♘f6)

Line 1A: 19 ♖f3 54
Line 1B: 19 ♖g3 60
Line 1C: (19 g4?!) 62
Line 1D: 18 ♖ae3 64
Line 1E: (18 exf5) 68
Line 1F: 13 ♗c2 (13...exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 ♘d7 17 ♘f1?!) 73
Line 1G: (12...h6 13 d5) 77

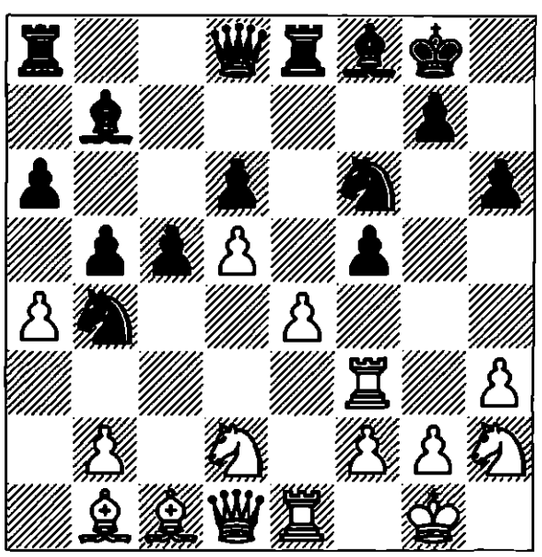
(For 17 ♖a3 c4, see Chapter 2.)

1A: Cutting Edge, 19 ♖f3

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 h6 13 ♗c2 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 ♘d7 17 ♖a3 f5 18 ♘h2 ♘f6)

19 ♖f3 *(D)*

B



It is hard to say whether this is White's best, but it has clearly attracted the most attention from the top guns lately. Part of White's idea is that he would prefer the exchange of pawns to happen on e4, so that he can quickly bring his knight to e4 while opening the b1-h7 diagonal for his bishop, rather than wondering how to get rid of a white pawn on f5.

19...♖e5!

Despite its peculiar appearance, this move makes a lot of sense and can be seen as a very concrete counter-measure to White's last move. Black would like to pick up the d5-pawn without opening the b1-h7 diagonal. This is well illustrated by the recent heavyweight battle Kariakin-Bacrot, Wijk aan Zee 2006 which instead saw 19...fxe4?! 20 ♘xe4 ♘bxd5 21 ♘g4!, when Black already had problems:

a) 21...♘xe4 22 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 (22...♘c3 23 ♖xf8+ ±) 23 ♖xe4 ♘c7 24 ♘xh6+ gxh6 25 ♖g4+ +–.

b) 21...♘xg4 22 hxg4 ♖e5 23 g5 hxg5 24 ♘xc5 ♖xe1+ 25 ♕xe1 ♕e8 26 ♕xe8 ♖xe8 27 ♘xb7 ♖e1+ 28 ♔h2 ♖xc1 29 ♗a2 +–.

c) The game continued 21...♔h8 and here Kariakin came up with the deadly 22 ♗d2!, preparing ♕c2 (without allowing ...♘b4), and it transpired that the attack was already nearly decisive. The game concluded 22...♘xe4 23 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 24 ♗xe4 ♘c3 25 ♗xc3 ♗xe4 26 ♖f4 ♗g6 27 ♘xh6 ♕g5 28 ♕f3 ♕xh6 29 ♗d2 ♕xf4 30 ♗xf4 ♖e8 31 axb5 axb5 32 ♕c6 ♔h7 33 ♕xb5 d5 34 ♕d7 d4 35 h4 ♖e4 36 ♗g3 ♗e7 37 h5 ♗xh5 38 f3 ♖e2 39 ♔f1 ♖xb2 40 ♕xe7 ♖b1+ 41 ♔f2 1-0.

We now return to the position after 19...♖e5 *(D)*:

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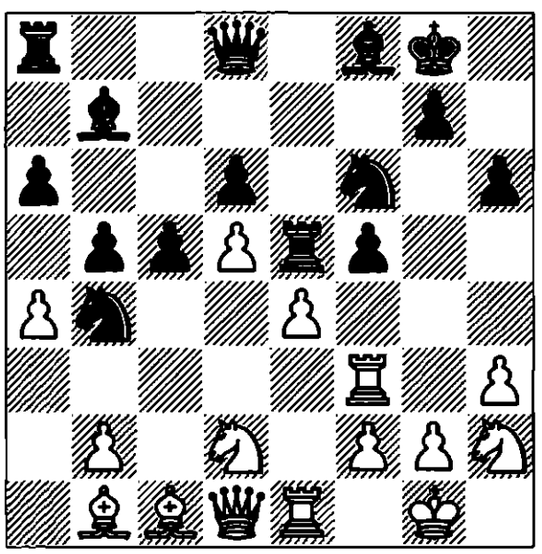


20 ♖xf5

This clearly is the most popular continuation. Still the exchange of rooks appears like a minor triumph for Black, who is striving for the endgame.

The main alternative 20 b3 looks logical, but it is rather slow and Black manages to liquidate White's centre while the threats to his king are not yet lethal. The variation is complicated, however, and quite characteristic of the whole line:

a) 20...♘xe4 avoids the exchange sacrifice and may well be Black's most precise move. After 21 ♘xe4 fxe4, White can try:

a1) 22 ♖xe4 – *20...fxe4 21 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 22 ♖xe4.*

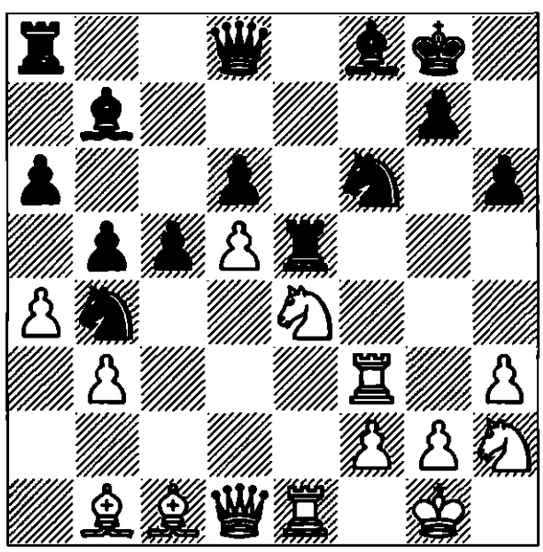
a2) 22 ♗xe4 looks wrong, as after 22...♗xd5 White has to part with his strongest attacking piece.

a3) 22 ♖g3 ♖xd5! (but not the panic reaction 22...h5? 23 ♖xe4 ♘xd5 24 ♗b2 ♘f6 25 ♖f4, when White's attack was already nearly decisive in Grünfeld-Kraidman, Tel-Aviv 1992) 23 ♕g4 (23 ♕e2 ♖d3! is very good for Black) 23...♖e5 24 ♗xh6 ♕f6 25 ♗d2 d5 and Black successfully parries the attack while his central preponderance prevails.

b) After 20...fxe4, White must take an important decision:

b1) 21 ♘xe4 *(D)* and now:

B



b11) 21...♘bxd5!? is the additional option that Black gets by first capturing with the pawn:

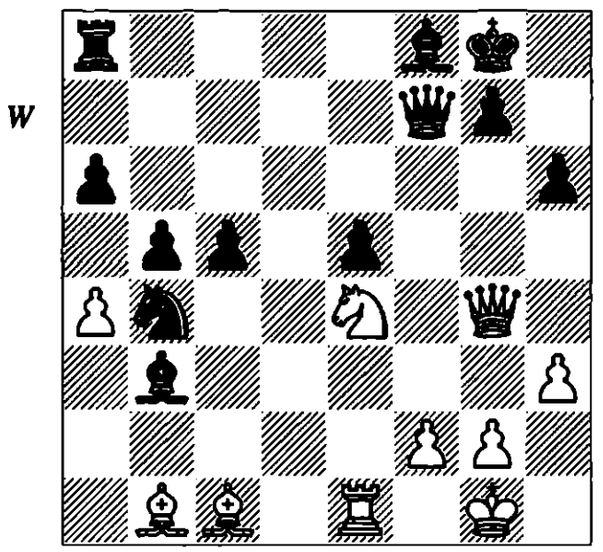
b111) 22 ♗b2? looks obvious, but is refuted by a well-known trick we shall encounter repeatedly in this chapter: 22...♖xe4 23 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 24 ♖xe4 and now 24...♘c3! 25 ♗xc3 ♗xe4 with a clear advantage to Black.

b112) The critical line is 22 ♘g4 ♘xg4 23 hxg4 ♕e7, which looks scary for Black, but it's not that easy to find a decisive breakthrough for White; e.g., 24 ♖f5 (24 ♗b2 ♖e6; 24 ♖h3 b4! threatening ...♘c3) 24...♖e8!, not fearing 25 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 26 ♘f6+ ♕xf6 27 ♖xe8 ♘c3 28 ♕d3 ♘xb1 29 ♕xb1 ♕f7 with more than enough compensation for the exchange.

b12) 21...♘xe4 22 ♖xe4 can also arise from the 20...♘xe4 move-order. After 22...♗xd5 23 ♖xe5 dxe5 24 ♘g4! ♗xf3 (24...e4 25 ♖g3 ♔h8 26 ♘xh6 ♕f6 27 ♗d2 ±) 25 ♕xf3, White has compensation according to Khalifman. A plausible line is 25...♖a7! (intending ...♕d5 and also defending along the 7th rank) 26 ♕f5 ♕d1+ 27 ♔h2 ♕xc1 28 ♘xe5 (28 ♕h7+ ♔f7 29 ♘xe5+ ♔e7 and the black king escapes) 28...g6 29 ♕e6+ ♔g7 30 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 with perpetual check and a draw.

b2) There also is the exchange sacrifice 21 ♖xf6!? ♕xf6 22 ♘g4 ♕f7 23 ♘xe5 dxe5 24 ♘xe4 ♗xd5 25 ♕g4, which is given as unclear

by *NCO*. After 25...♗xb3 *(D)*, White has tried two continuations, both rather messy:



b21) The speculative 26 ♘g5? of Polster-Ranft, corr. 1996 simply leads to favourable exchanges for Black: 26...hxg5! (in the game Black didn't call the bluff, played the weak move 26...♕c4? and duly lost) 27 ♕e4 ♗c2! 28 ♗xc2 ♘xc2 29 ♕xc2 c4 and Black has an overwhelming advantage; e.g., 30 ♖xe5 ♖e8, etc. With the limited material, there are no threats to his king any more and his positional trumps are obvious.

b22) 26 ♗xh6 ♘c2 27 ♗e3 (27 ♖c1 ♗e6 28 ♕d1 gxh6 29 ♕xc2 c4 30 ♘f6+ ♔h8 ∓) 27...♗e6 28 ♕h4 ♗e7 and now:

b221) 29 ♗g5? ♘xe1 30 ♗xe7 ♗f5 31 ♕g5 ♕g6 32 ♕xg6 ♗xg6 33 ♔f1 ♖a7 34 ♗g5 ♘xg2 35 ♔xg2 c4 and the endgame is clearly better for Black.

b222) 29 ♘g5 ♗xg5 30 ♕e4 ♘xe1 (½-½ Barre-Ruch, corr. 2000) 31 ♕xa8+ ♕f8 32 ♗h7+ ♔f7 33 ♗g6+ ♔g8 =.

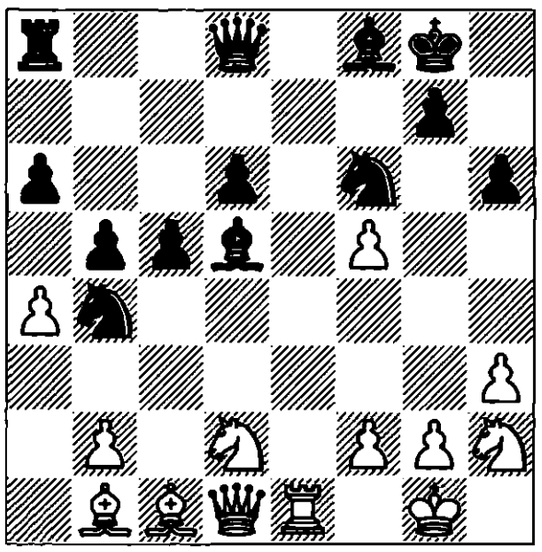
20...♖xf5 21 exf5

Black has succeeded in blocking the b1-h7 diagonal with a white pawn. We shall see a lot of lines where White would be happy to sacrifice a pawn with f6 if only Black would allow it.

21...♗xd5 *(D)*

This unbalanced position can be considered a logical extension of Black's 17...f5. Obviously Black has very good endgame prospects due to his mobile queenside pawn-mass. The big question is whether White can make something of his kingside initiative.

22 ♘g4



This is the consistent way to develop White's kingside initiative. White has also tried:

a) 22 b3 turned out to be too slow in Feco-Zagrapan, corr. 2004: 22...♖a7 23 axb5 axb5 24 ♗b2 ♖e7 25 ♖xe7 ♕xe7 26 ♗a3 ♘c6 27 ♗b2 ♘e5 28 ♘hf1 ♗c6 29 ♘g3 d5 ∓.

b) In the stem game Khalifman chose 22 ♘e4?!. Today this is considered harmless (or even dubious): 22...♗xe4 23 ♗xe4 d5 and *NCO* concludes '∓'. That actually seems to sum it all up neatly. Nevertheless we add some games and analysis to give the reader a better feel for the position. After 24 ♗f3 (or 24 ♗b1 d4! ∓ Khalifman), Black replies 24...c4, securing the d3-square for his knight. White has tried various moves with limited success:

b1) 25 ♘g4 ♘xg4 26 hxg4 ♘d3 27 ♖e3 and here, instead of the naïve 27...♗c5?! which allowed 28 ♖xd3 cxd3 29 ♕xd3, when White had a promising initiative for the exchange in Sarobe-Price, corr. 1999, we suggest taking preemptive measures against the exchange sacrifice with 27...♖c8!.

b2) After 25 ♖e6 ♘d3 26 ♗e3, Black should play 26...d4! before White's bishop settles on that square. Then, after 27 ♗xh6 (27 ♗xa8 dxe3 28 ♖xa6 exf2+ 29 ♔h1 ♕e8 wins for Black) 27...♘xb2 White has tried:

b21) 28 ♕a1 ♘xa4 29 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 30 ♕xd4 ♕d5 is very comfortable for Black:

b211) 31 ♕f4 ♘c3 32 ♕f3 b4 33 ♗c1 a5 34 ♗b2 ♕xf3 35 ♘xf3 ♘cd5 –+ Drogi-A.Kovacs, corr. 2001.

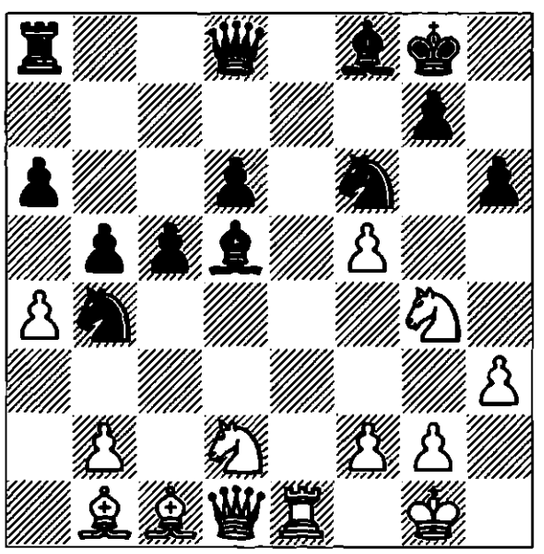
b212) The endgame after 31 ♗e3 ♕xd4 32 ♗xd4 should be winning for Black as well; e.g., 32...c3 33 ♖xa6 c2 34 ♗e3 (34 ♖c6 ♗c5 35 ♗e3 b4 ∓) 34...♘d5 35 ♗c1 ♘c5 ∓.

b22) 28 ♕c2 was a practical success in the first top-level game with 19 ♖f3, but is also close to winning for Black: 28...♘xa4 29 ♗g5 d3 30 ♕d2 ♘c5 31 ♗xf6 gxf6 32 ♖c6 and now:

b221) 32...♖c8 33 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 34 ♗d5+ ♔h7 35 ♕f4 d2 36 ♕g4 d1♕+ 37 ♕xd1 ♕xf5 38 ♘g4 ♗h6? (after 38...♕d3, Black is winning) 39 ♕e1 ♗f8 40 ♕e8 ♕b1+ 41 ♔h2 ♗d6+ 42 g3 ♕g6 43 ♕d8 1-0 Khalifman-Karpov, Reggio Emilia 1991/2.

b222) 32...♘b3 is simpler: 33 ♕f4 ♘d4 34 ♖c7 ♗g7 35 ♔f1 ♘xf3 36 ♘xf3 ♖c8 0-1 Gennari-Panicali, corr. 1999.

We now return to 22 ♘g4 *(D)*: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22...♘xg4!

We recommend this move as we think it is the most practical choice in this well-known position.

22...♗f7 is Black's most common response, as in the famous and theoretically important rapid game Morozevich-Grishchuk, Dubai rpd 2002. White continued 23 ♘e4 ♘xg4 24 ♕xg4 d5 25 f6!, sacrificing a piece for a promising attack. While this may be theoretically OK for Black, in practice White's score is crushing.

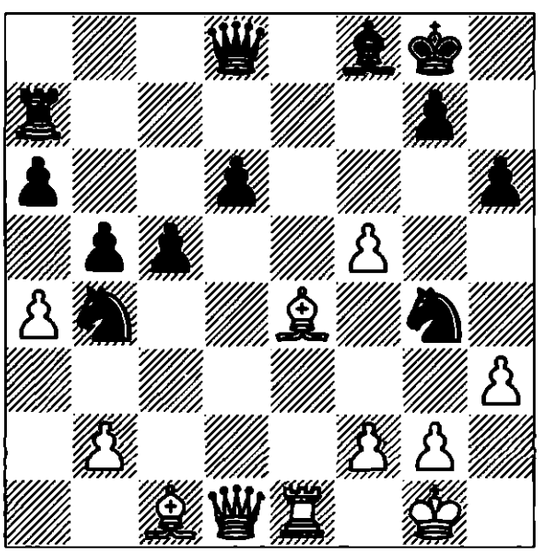
Therefore, as an alternative, we recommend Beliavsky's 22...♖a7!?, which is a notable defensive idea. Theory hasn't quite settled yet, but for the moment Black is comfortably holding his own:

a) Two recent GM battles have continued 23 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 24 ♘e4, and now:

a1) Black was never in trouble in Haba-Dervishi, Austria 2004: 24...♗xe4 25 ♗xe4 ♖e7 26 axb5 axb5 27 ♗d5+ ♘xd5 28 ♕xd5+ ♔h7 29 ♖e6 ♖xe6 30 fxe6 ♕e5 31 ♕d3+ ♔h8 32 ♕f3 ♗e7 33 ♕f7 ♗f6 34 ♗xh6 gxh6 35 ♕f8+ ♔h7 36 ♕f7+ ♔h8 ½-½.

a2) 24...♕xf5!? seems to be state of the art: 25 ♗d2 ♗a2 26 ♗xb4 ♗xb1 27 ♘xd6 ♗c2 28 ♘xf5 ♗xd1 29 ♖xd1 cxb4 = T.Petrosian-Sulskis, Kusadasi Ech 2006.

b) White's alternative path to the kingside, 23 ♘e4 ♗xe4 (23...♘xe4 24 ♗xe4 ♕a8 and now 25 ♗xd5+ ♕xd5 26 ♕xd5+ ♘xd5 was clearly fine for Black in Schuh-Schuett, corr. 1995, but obviously 25 f3! is more critical, when we are sceptical about Black's position) 24 ♗xe4, also seems fine for Black after 24...♘xg4 *(D)* (24...♘xe4 25 ♖xe4 d5 26 ♖e6 gives White an initiative according to Beliavsky):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b1) 25 ♗d5+ ♘xd5 26 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 27 hxg4 bxa4 (27...♖e7 looks simpler; e.g., 28 ♖d1 ♕e8! =) 28 ♗d2 ♕a8! 29 ♕d3 ♖e7 'with counterplay', is a line from Wedberg.

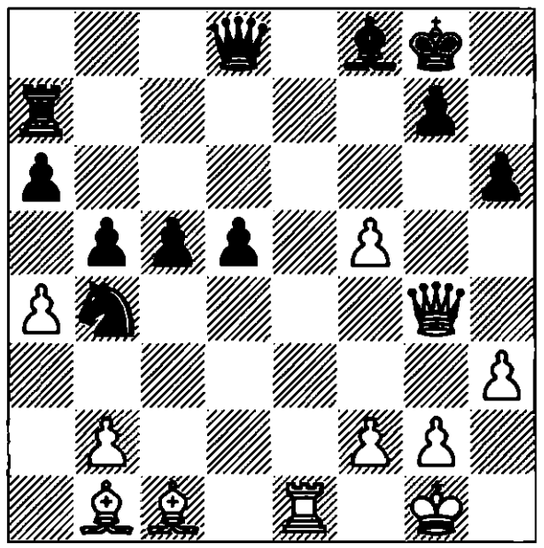
b2) More critical is 25 ♕xg4 d5:

b21) Wedberg suggests 26 ♗f3 ♘d3 27 ♖d1 and now rather than his 27...♘xc1?! 28 ♖xc1, when the weakened light-square complex in Black's camp gives White good attacking chances, Black should test 27...c4!, which goes unmentioned by Wedberg; e.g., 28 ♗xh6 (28 ♗e3 ♖f7 =) 28...♘e5 29 ♗g5 ♘xf3+ 30 gxf3 and now both 30...♕d6 and 30...♕d7 lead to very double-edged positions where Black seems to be fine.

b22) 26 ♗b1 *(D)* was Morozevich's choice:

b221) 26...♖e7 is complicated but most likely good for White:

b2211) 27 ♖d1 ♕d6 28 ♗d2 ♘c6 29 axb5 axb5 30 ♗f4 ♕f6 (now Black can use the f5-pawn as a shield) 31 ♕f3 ♘b4 32 ♗e3 ♖d7 33



b3 (½-½ Morozevich-Beliavsky, Hyderabad 2002) 33...♕c3!? ∓.

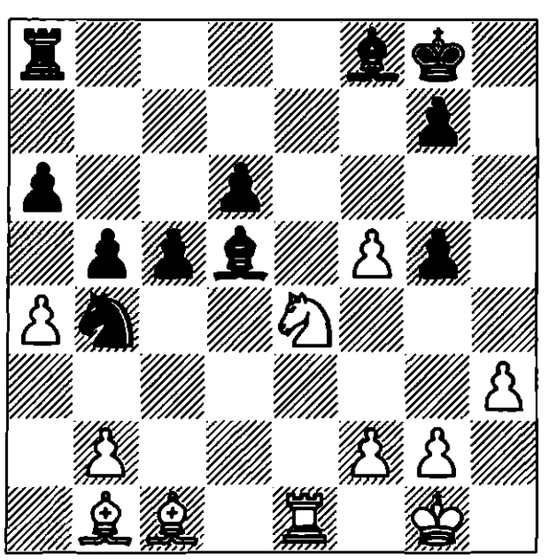
b2212) 27 ♗e3 ♕d6 28 axb5 axb5 29 ♖c1 c4 30 ♖d1 ♖f7 31 ♕f3 ♗e7 32 ♗d2 d4 33 b3 ♕e5 34 bxc4 bxc4 35 ♗xb4 ♗xb4 36 ♗a2 ♔h8 ½-½ Polevoy-Houtman, corr. 2004.

b2213) Beliavsky's 27 ♖e6 is stronger; for example, 27...♖xe6 28 fxe6 ♕f6 29 axb5 axb5 30 ♗d2 ♘c6 31 ♗c3 ♘e5 (not 31...d4? 32 ♕e4 ±) 32 ♕e2 ♗d6 33 ♕xb5 (33 f4? ♕xf4 34 e7 ♔f7 gets White nowhere) 33...♕xe6, when the two bishops might still yield White a slight pull.

b222) As an improvement Beliavsky suggests 26...♕f6 27 ♖e6 ♕d4 with good counterplay for Black.

23 hxg4

In practice the endgame arising after 23 ♕xg4 ♕g5! 24 ♕xg5 hxg5 25 ♘e4 *(D)* has proved satisfactory for Black:



a) The routine 25...bxa4 appears fine for Black; for example, 26 ♗xg5 (or 26 ♘xg5 ♗c4 planning to land on d3 with the knight) 26...♖e8, Huels-Voss, corr. 1995.

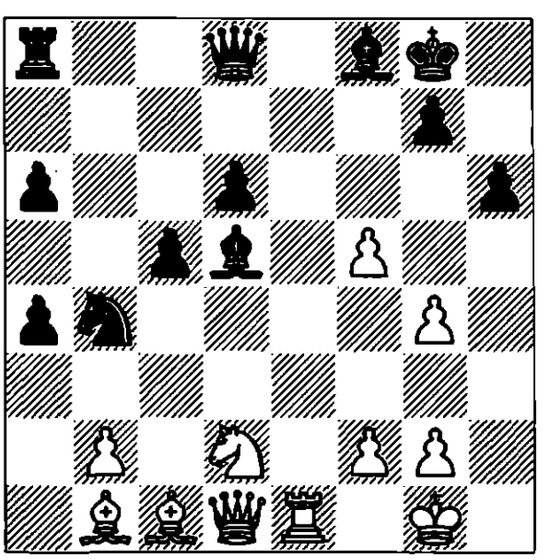
b) Black also has the slightly surprising twist 25...♗b3!?:

b1) 26 ♘xg5 ♘c2! = (26...♗xa4? is too slow in view of 27 ♘e6).

b2) 26 axb5 axb5 27 ♘xg5 ♗c2 28 ♗xc2 (28 ♗d2 ♗xb1 29 ♖xb1 ♘d3 gives Black sufficient counterplay) 28...♘xc2 29 ♖d1 ♖a1 30 ♔f1 (30 ♘f3? ♘b4 ∓) 30...♘d4 31 ♔e1 ♘xf5 and from here both Smolka-Lasek, corr. 1999 and Milton-Yerofeev, Pushkin 2001 quickly ended in draws.

23...bxa4! *(D)*

It is imperative for Black to create counterplay on the queenside. The position after the text-move (which, as far as we can see, is untested in over-the-board play) has been played in some high-quality correspondence games with good results for Black, and must be better than 23...♗f7 24 ♘f3, when White threatens g5.



24 ♘e4!?

In our opinion this is the only critical test of Black's play. We have no practical examples, so we can only give some sample lines. Instead:

a) 24 ♕xa4 appears to be a step in the wrong direction as it doesn't contribute to White's kingside attack at all. Black can use this breathing-space to consolidate. This has been confirmed in a couple of correspondence games, which were quickly agreed drawn: 24...♖b8 (24...a5 25 ♕d1 ½-½ Balabaev-Smalcl, corr. 2002) 25 ♕d1 ♗a2 26 ♗xa2+ ♘xa2 27 ♘f3 ½-½ Nyvlt-Voss, corr. 2001.

b) After 24 ♘f3, 24...♕d7 25 g5 ♖e8 seems to hold on neatly. As usual in this variation,

exchanging some pieces relieves a lot of the pressure on Black's position, reducing White's attacking potential; e.g., 26 ♗e3 (26 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 27 f6 hxg5 works fine for Black) 26...♗b3! 27 ♕d2 ♘d5 and Black is ready to initiate favourable exchanges.

24...♗b3!

This is the key move and our real discovery. Even though the lines are still complicated and Black needs to be very alert to White's attack, we believe the bishop move saves the whole line for Black. Other moves are weaker: 24...♗a2? 25 ♗xa2+ ♘xa2 26 ♕d5+; 24...♗xe4 25 ♖xe4 d5 26 ♖e6 also looks grim for Black, as both g5 and f6 are looming over his position.

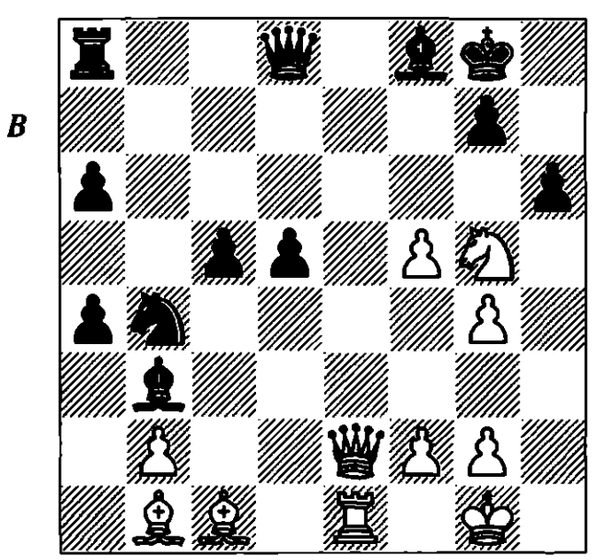
25 ♕e2

25 ♕f3 should be met by 25...♗c2!, when 26 f6!? ♗xb1 27 f7+ ♔h8 28 ♘c3 ♗g6 29 ♖e8 ♕xe8 30 fxe8♕ ♖xe8 is a plausible line. In the final position, Black is not worse, as his minor pieces are excellently posted.

25...d5

Obviously Black has to be quick, as otherwise g5 might decide things.

26 ♘g5! *(D)*



We believe this continuation is the only critical try. Otherwise Black has time to catch his breath.

26...d4

Not, of course, 26...hxg5? 27 ♕e6+ ♔h8 28 ♖e3, when White wins instantly.

27 ♘e6 d3!

This is a major achievement for Black, as he manages to shut White's b1-bishop, often White's most dangerous attacking piece, out of the game.

28 ♕e3

This is the best square for the queen. White has to keep an eye on the d2-square and from e3 the queen also contributes to the g5 break and can sometimes go to h3 (e.g. after g5 hxg5, ♘xg5).

28...♕d7 29 g5

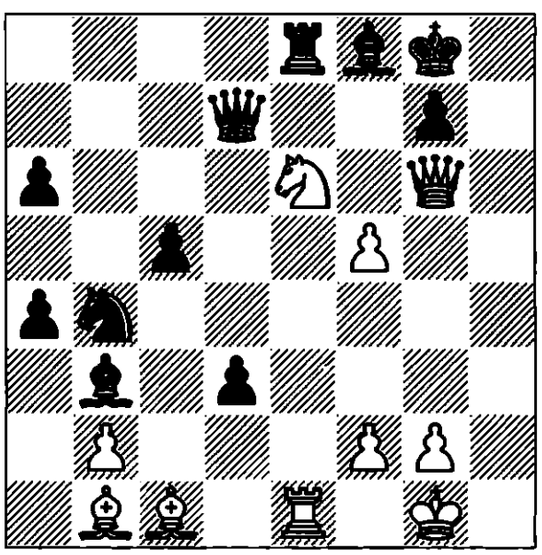
What else?

29...hxg5 30 ♕xg5

Unfortunately for White, 30 ♘xg5 doesn't work because the f5-pawn is hanging.

30...♖e8 31 ♕g6 *(D)*

This at least is tricky. Otherwise White is simply much worse.



31...♗d6!

The final touch. Instead, the materialistic 31...d2? loses on the spot to 32 ♗xd2 ♕xd2 33 ♖f1!, when the threat of ♘g5 is too strong. The immediate 31...♕f7? doesn't work either on account of 32 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 33 ♘g5+. The text-move prepares ...♕f7, which will follow on almost any white move now; e.g.:

32 ♗h6

Or 32 ♖e3 ♕f7! 33 ♕g4? (33 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 34 ♘g5+ is still a draw) 33...♗xe6 34 ♖xe6 (34 fxe6? ♕f4! and Black wins) 34...♖xe6 35 fxe6 ♕f6 and Black is better.

32...♕f7! 33 ♕xf7+

Not 33 ♕g4, when the computer's 33...g6! is best, undermining White's entire construction at its roots.

33...♔xf7 34 ♘g5+ ♔f8 35 ♘h7+

Not the naïve 35 ♗xg7+? ♔xg7 36 ♖xe8 d2 and the black d-pawn is the hero of the day!

35...♔f7

with a draw.

Conclusion:
Currently this is the main battleground of the Zaitsev Variation. Therefore no conclusion is likely to stand for very long. It is clear, though, that these variations are not for the faint-hearted. Furthermore it seems likely that White's practical chances are better than whatever is the theoretical conclusion. White is attacking Black's king, and any slip by Black may prove lethal. However, if Black manages to parry White's immediate assault, his positional trumps will almost certainly prevail. We believe we did a good job in the main line to defend Black's position, but we certainly urge the reader to have an independent look at the lines, as they tend to be extremely messy.

1B: Cutting Edge, 19 ♖g3

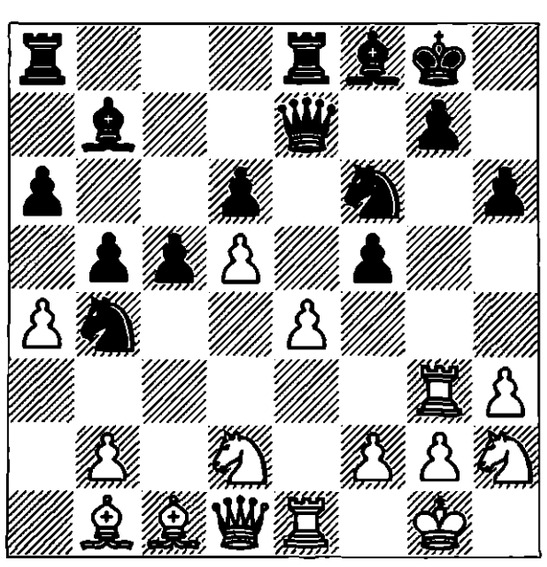
(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 h6 13 ♗c2 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 ♘d7 17 ♖a3 f5 18 ♘h2 ♘f6)

19 ♖g3

This too is a very natural follow-up to 18 ♘h2. Placing the rook on the same file as Black's king should soon generate direct kingside threats, with ♗xh6 perhaps the most obvious idea.

19...♕e7!? *(D)*

It may look risky to put the queen opposite the e1-rook, but the pin down the e-file is a bit annoying for White and the queen is going to f7 to aid the kingside. For 19...♔h8, see the Preface by Leif.



20 ♘hf3!?

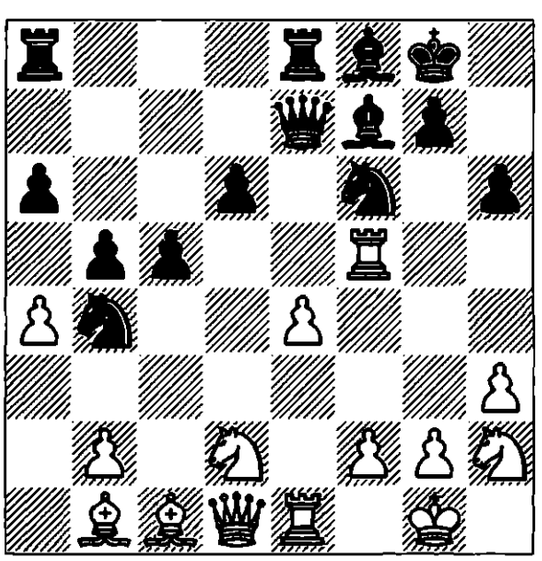
This slightly counter-intuitive return of the knight was introduced by Topalov in 2001 and is still White's best shot for an advantage. By protecting his rook, White renews the threat of exf5.

For the moment the alternatives work very well theoretically for Black:

a) 20 ♖ge3 ♕d7 (20...♕f7 seems more consistent and already looks comfortable for Black, but the text-move works fine too) 21 axb5 axb5 22 exf5 ♘bxd5 23 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 24 ♘e4 ♘xe4 25 ♗xe4 ♘e3 26 ♖xe3 ♖xe4 ∓ is analysis by Flear.

b) 20 e5!? is quite a dangerous pawn sacrifice: 20...f4 21 ♖g6 dxe5 (21...♘bxd5, as in Dovzik-Rybansky, Slovakian Cht 2002, should lead to the same position after 22 ♘g4 ♘xg4 23 ♕xg4 dxe5) 22 ♘g4 ♘xg4 23 ♕xg4 ♘xd5 24 ♖xh6 (24 ♕f5 ♕f7 ∓) 24...♘f6 25 ♕g5 (perhaps 25 ♕g6 is more critical, but after, say, 25...♖ad8 we cannot see any concrete threats for White) 25...c4 26 b3 c3 27 ♘f3 ♗xf3 28 gxf3 ♖ad8 29 ♔h2 ♖d6 ∓ Kazoks-Ruch, corr. 2001.

c) 20 ♖f3 was Grishchuk's choice against Bacrot, but has had few followers as Bacrot quickly gained the upper hand: 20...♗xd5! 21 ♖xf5 ♗f7 *(D)* and now:

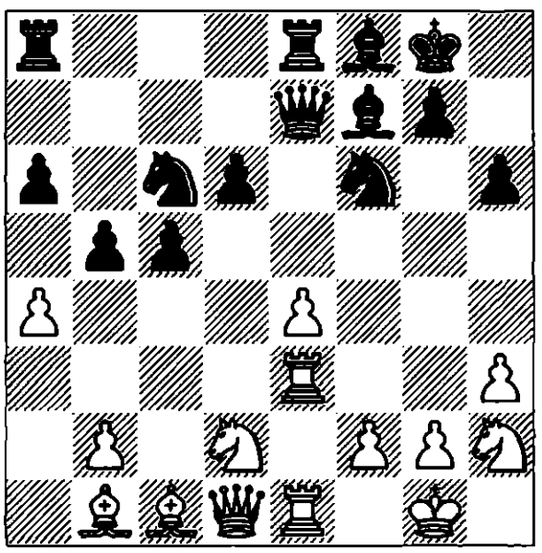


c1) 22 ♘df3?! sacrifices the exchange for insufficient compensation: 22...♗e6 23 g4 ♗xf5 24 gxf5 (24 exf5 ♕d7 –+) 24...♕b7! 25 ♘g4 ♘xe4 26 ♗xh6 and now:

c11) 26...gxh6 leads to some amazing fireworks: 27 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 28 ♗xe4 d5 29 ♘f6+ ♔g7 30 ♘xd5 ♖e8 31 f6+ ♔h8 32 ♘e7!! ♕xe4 33 ♘g5!! ♖xe7 34 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 with unclear consequences according to Mione and Bertola.

c12) Instead, the cold-blooded 26...♘f6! takes the sting out of the white offensive: 27 ♗e3 (27 ♘xf6+ gxf6 is obviously no problem for Black) 27...♘xg4 28 hxg4 ♕d5 29 ♘d2 (29 ♘g5 ♕xd1 30 ♖xd1 d5 31 ♘e6 ♖ac8 –+ Ftačnik) 29...c4 30 g5 ♘d3 and Bacrot had successfully parried the attack and went on to win in Grishchuk-Bacrot, Enghien les Bains 2001.

c2) In a later game White tried to improve by 22 ♖f3!? ♘c6 23 ♖fe3 *(D)*, with a further split: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c21) Ftačnik suggests 23...g5 24 ♘hf3 ♗g7 'with unclear play', but we don't see the need for such drastic measures. 25 ♘f1, sending the knight off to f5, might be annoying here.

c22) 23...g6 and now:

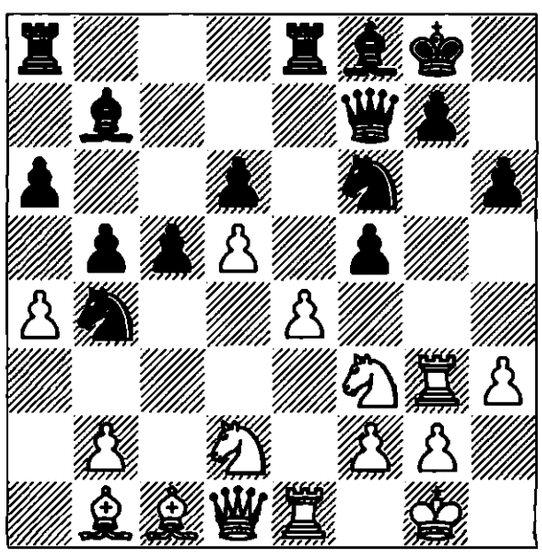
c221) 24 f4 ♗g7 25 ♘hf3 ♘h5 is fine for Black.

c222) 24 ♖g3 ♗g7 25 e5 ♘xe5!? 26 ♗xg6 (26 f4? ♘h5 27 ♖g4 ♘xg4! 28 ♖xe7 ♗d4+ leads to a mate in 3!) 26...♗xg6 27 ♖xg6 ♘xg6 28 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 doesn't offer White much according to Vescovi.

c223) The typical sacrifice 24 e5?! dxe5 25 ♖g3 ♔h7 (25...♔g7!?) 26 ♘e4 doesn't work too well for White and even though he later won (with a brilliant combination) in Ye Jiangchuan-Vescovi, Hyderabad rpd 2002, his compensation for the pawn was hardly sufficient at this point. Vescovi gives 26...♘d4 as Black's best.

20...♕f7! *(D)*

This has – as far as we can see – yet to be tested in over-the-board play, but has worked well for Black in a couple of correspondence games. Backed up with computer analysis we are fully convinced of its soundness. 20...fxe4?! happened in the stem game, but this unleashes the latent energy of all the white pieces: 21 ♘xe4 ♗xd5 22 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 and now the very strong 23 ♗d2! threatening ♗xb4 and preparing ♗c3 when both white bishops will point menacingly towards Black's king. In Topalov-Vescovi, Moscow FIDE KO 2001, White won relatively quickly. An instructive variation is 23...♖xe1+ 24 ♕xe1 ♕xb2 (24...♗f7? 25 ♕e4 +–) 25 ♗c3 ♕b3 26 axb5 axb5 27 ♘d2 ♕a3 28 ♘e4, when White's attack is decisive.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21 exf5

Again we consider this change of the pawn-structure a minor achievement for Black as it temporarily closes the b1-h7 diagonal. However, as we shall see, the f5-pawn can easily become a dangerous attacking weapon in its own right.

The main alternative, 21 ♘h4!? fxe4 22 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 23 ♗xe4 ♗xd5 24 ♗b1 does look a bit scary for Black at first sight, but after 24...♖xe1+ 25 ♕xe1 ♖e8 26 ♕d1 ♗e4! he gets to neutralize the dangerous b1-bishop, reducing the pressure upon his kingside. After 27 ♗xh6 Black has a choice:

a) 27...♕f6 is very tempting as White is practically forced to go for 28 ♘g6 (28 ♗g5 ♕xb2 29 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 and Black is in complete control) 28...gxh6 29 ♘e7+ ♔f7 30 ♗xe4 ♔xe7, when we seriously doubt White's compensation; e.g., 31 ♗g6 ♖b8 32 ♕g4 h5! 33 ♗xh5 (33 ♕xh5 ♔d7 –+) 33...♔d8 and the king escapes.

b) Petrović-Frey Beckman, corr. 2001 continued 27...d5 28 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 29 ♘g6 ♗d6 30 f4 ♕e6 31 ♕h5 gxh6 ½-½. The final position

looks completely chaotic of course, but all the computers show dead equal here!

21...♕xd5 22 axb5 axb5 23 ♘h4

After 23 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 24 ♘h4 c4 25 ♘g6 ♘d3 26 ♗xd3 cxd3 27 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 28 ♘f1 ♖c8! Black is the one with a strong initiative.

23...♖xe1+ 24 ♕xe1

While the position isn't exactly quiet, Black has got a breathing pause, and it seems he can choose between several satisfactory defences.

Conclusion:

It seems that the queen manoeuvre ...♕e7-f7 gives Black a fully satisfactory position in this line, but some of the positions are chaotic and take strong nerves to play well.

Illustrative Game 1

Bubir – Epiney

corr. 2003

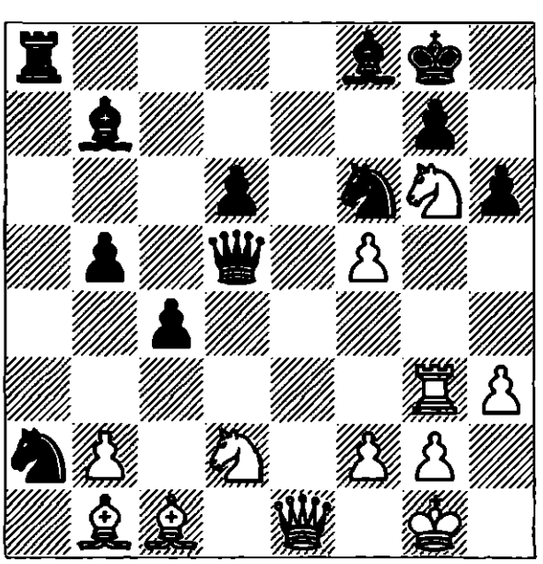
24...♘a2!?

The more conservative options 24...♖e8 and 24...c4 also look satisfactory for Black.

25 ♘g6 c4? *(D)*

This allows a surprising attack. Black should go for 25...♖e8 26 ♕f1 ♘xc1 27 ♕xc1 ♕f7, when he is solid with the better long-term prospects.

W



26 ♘xc4!! bxc4 27 ♗xh6!

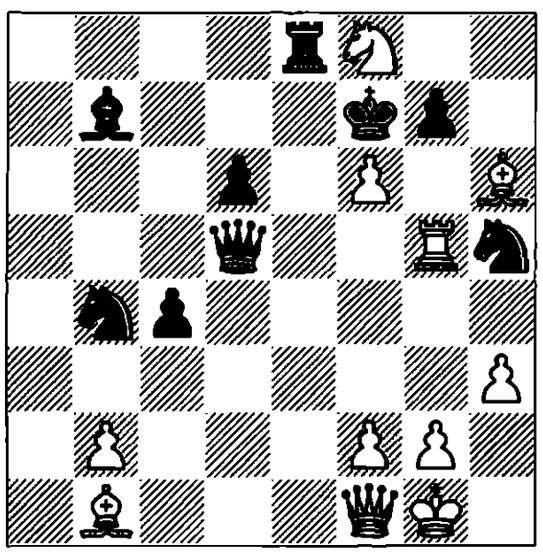
White's attack is probably now decisive.

27...♖e8 28 ♕f1 ♘b4 29 ♘xf8 ♘h5

After 29...♔xf8, White should avoid 30 ♖xg7 ♖e7 31 ♖g6+ ♔f7 32 ♗g5 ♖e1!, when he has to go for a repetition. Instead White should play the simple 30 ♗xg7+, when Black is defenceless after 30...♔f7 31 ♗xf6 ♔xf6 32 ♕c1!, e.g., 32...♔e7 33 ♕e1+ ♔f8 34 ♕xb4 and White is winning easily.

30 ♖g5 ♔f7 31 f6! *(D)*

B



This combined attack on Black's queen and kingside defences decides the game.

31...♖e5

After 31...gxh6 32 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 33 ♗g6+ ♔xf8 34 ♗xh5 the piece-count shows that White is winning.

32 ♘h7 ♘d3 33 fxg7 ♔g8 34 ♖xh5!

A simple tactic that settles the score; if Black takes the rook there is a major fork on f6. White will soon be three pawns up – one of them a passed pawn on the seventh rank.

34...♔xh7 35 ♖h4 ♖e4 36 ♖xe4 ♕xe4 37 b3 ♗d5 38 bxc4 ♗xc4 39 ♕d1 ♕g6 40 ♕d2 ♕f5 41 ♕e3 ♕g6 42 ♕d4 ♕xh6 43 ♕xc4 ♔xg7 44 ♗xd3 ♕f6 45 ♕g4+ 1-0

1C: Cutting Edge, Rare 19th Moves

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 h6 13 ♗c2 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 ♘d7 17 ♖a3 f5 18 ♘h2 ♘f6)

19 g4?!

This somewhat surprising move has been played by Leko, and some might argue that this is the only positive thing that can be said about it. It has been more frequently tested in correspondence play than in over-the-board contests.

Its popularity in postal play could be the result of mild desperation from White. Imagine

that you have reached the position after 18...♘f6 quickly and with no deep analysis so far. Now, with three months accumulated thinking time on your clock, you turn to your databases and analysis engines looking for White's strongest continuation – only to discover that there is nothing really promising. When you put White's over-the-board successes under the microscope, it appears that his kingside attack succeeds not because he has a superior position but because Black stumbles under the competitive pressure. The inescapable conclusion seems to be that usually it is the white pawn on f5 which kills your attacking prospects. So you somewhat reluctantly settle for a move that at least forces Black to take on e4, opening the b1-h7 diagonal.

White's remaining 19th-move alternatives are:

a) 19 ♖ae3 – *18 ♖ae3 ♘f6 19 ♘h2.*

b) 19 exf5 is very rare but quite a challenge. After 19...♖xe1+ 20 ♕xe1 Black has a choice:

b1) After 20...♗xd5 21 ♘g4 Black must be careful:

b11) 21...bxa4 22 ♖g3 ♘xg4 23 ♖xg4 ♔h8 24 ♘e4 ♗a2? 25 ♗xh6!! with a dangerous attack, Kunte-Almasi, Istanbul OL 2000.

b12) 21...♗e7 22 ♘e4 ♘xg4 23 hxg4 gave White the initiative in Pavlović-Hazai, Vrnjačka Banja 1988.

b13) 21...♘xg4 22 hxg4 ♕d7 is unclear according to Wedberg; 23 ♘e4 ♖e8 24 ♖e3 ♗c6 followed by ...d5 looks satisfactory for Black.

b2) We quite like the look of 20...♕e7!?, which should be compared with Line 1B; e.g., 21 ♕f1 (21 ♕e6+ ♕f7! and 21 ♖e3 ♕f7 are also satisfactory for Black) 21...♖e8 22 axb5 ♕e1 23 ♘g4 ♘xg4 24 hxg4 axb5 25 ♘f3 ♕xf1+ 26 ♔xf1 ♗xd5 27 g5 hxg5 28 ♗xg5 ♖a8 29 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 and the players quickly agreed a draw in Vasiukov-Razuvaev, Moscow 1987. Instead of the peaceful 28...♖a8, Razuvaev points out 28...♗e7!?, leading to a slight advantage for Black.

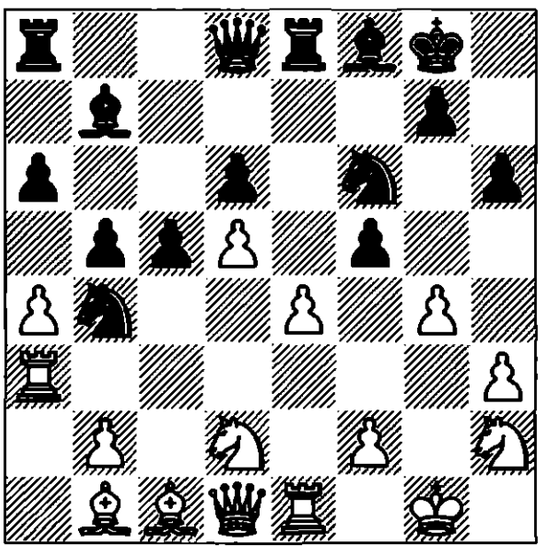
We now return to 19 g4?! *(D)*:

19...fxe4 20 g5

Not 20 ♘xe4?! ♗xd5 21 ♘xf6+?! ♕xf6 22 ♗d2 ♕xb2 23 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 24 ♗xb4, Della Morte-Hungaski, Villa Ballester 2004, when White's position crumbles after 24...♗c4!.

20...hxg5 21 ♘xe4 ♘bxd5

B



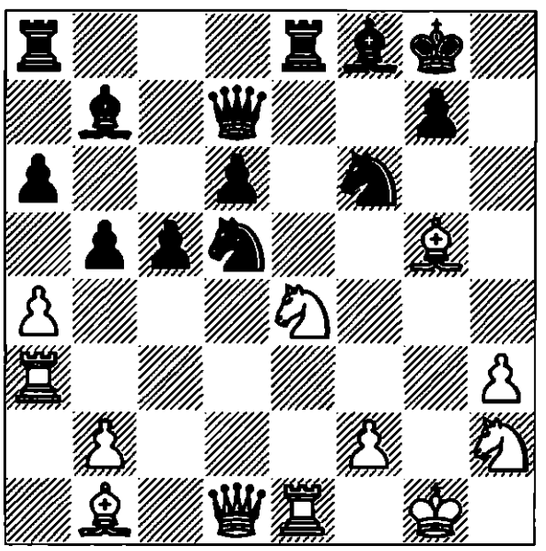
Black has other options here, but this seems to work very well.

22 ♗xg5

22 ♘xg5 ♖xe1+ 23 ♕xe1 ♕e8 is no problem for Black; his queen is going to either h5 or c6.

22...♕d7 *(D)*

W



23 ♗xf6

Other moves are easier to deal with:

a) 23 ♖g3 ♘xe4 24 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 25 ♗xe4 ♘c3! (the typical trick) 26 bxc3 ♗xe4 ∓ Salinnikov-Sulypa, Alushta 2000.

b) 23 ♘g4 ♘xe4 24 ♖xe4 (24 ♗xe4? ♖xe4 25 ♖xe4 ♕f5 –+) 24...♖xe4 25 ♗xe4 ♘c3! ∓ (it's that trick again).

c) 23 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 24 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 25 ♗g6 ♕c6 26 ♖f3 ♖e5 27 ♗f4 ♕d5 28 ♕b1 ♖e6 ∓ Milher-Maia, corr. 1998.

23...♘xf6 24 ♘xf6+ gxf6 25 ♘g4

The text-move was criticized by Almasi, who gave 25 ♖g3+ ♗g7 26 ♗g6 ♖xe1+ 27 ♕xe1 as a better chance. Still, we have faith in Black's position after his prophylactic 27...♔f8. A third

option is 25 ♖ae3 ♖xe3 26 ♖xe3 ♗g7 27 ♕h5 ♔f8 28 ♗f5 ♕c6 (28...♕f7!?) 29 ♘f3 ♖e8 30 axb5 axb5 31 ♗e6 ♖e7 32 ♕f5 ♔e8 ∓ Kribben-Mahnke, corr. 1998.

25...♗g7 26 ♖g3 ♖xe1+!? 27 ♕xe1 ♔f8 28 ♗g6

White would like to make 28 ♘e3 followed by ♘f5 work, but Black has 28...♖e8! 29 ♗g6 (or 29 ♕d1 ♖e5! ∓ Almasi) 29...♖e5! 30 ♕a5? (this is obviously the wrong direction and a sign that things have gone wrong for White) 30...♗h6! ∓ Rusak-Müller, corr. 2000.

28...f5! 29 ♘h2 ♕e7 30 ♕d2 ♕f6 31 ♖g5 ♗h6?

This leads to a draw, but Black should go for the whole point! Correct is 31...♔e7!, evacuating the king to the queenside. Almasi gives 32 ♗xf5 ♕xb2, winning for Black. By the way, he also gives 31...♗c8!? as a clear advantage to Black.

Conclusion:

Theoretically this line shouldn't worry Black, but the resulting positions are uniformly messy, and may not be what you would like to face in a morning round against a weaker player.

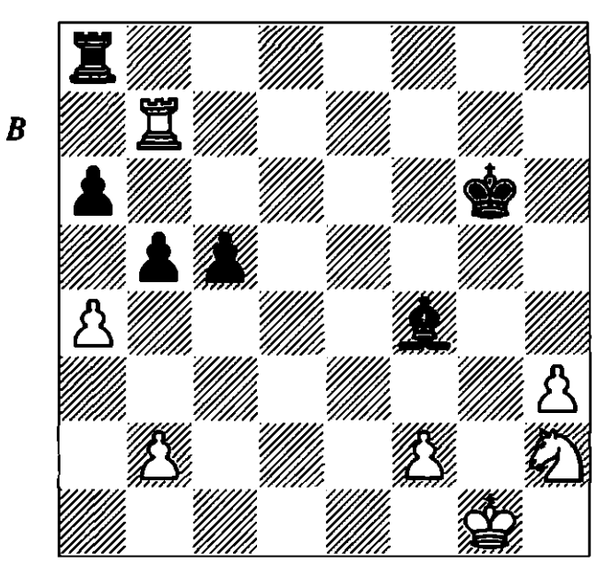
Illustrative Game 2

Leko – Z. Almasi
Dortmund 1998

32 ♖xf5 ♗xd2 33 ♖xf6+ ♔g7 34 ♖xd6 ♗f4

This position is the logical result of Black's 31...♗h6 and quite balanced.

35 ♖d7+ ♔xg6 36 ♖xb7 *(D)*



36...bxa4

36...♖b8!? 37 ♖xb8 (37 ♖a7 ♖b6) 37...♗xb8 should also be OK for Black. The bishop is clearly superior to the knight, with pawns on both sides, and that fully compensates for the pawn deficit.

37 ♖b6+ ♔g7 38 ♘g4 ♖b8 39 ♖xa6 ♖b4 40 ♘e3 ♗e5 41 ♘d5 ½-½

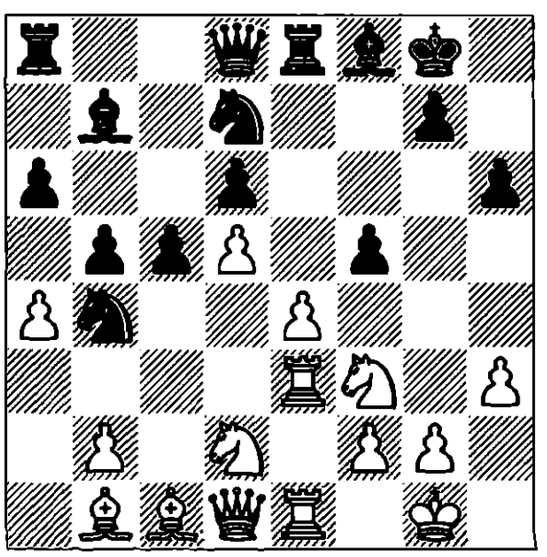
After the likely continuation 41...♖xb2 42 ♖xa4 ♗d4 43 ♘e3 ♔f6, Black's more active pieces fully compensate for White's extra pawn. It must also be taken into account that in a worst-case scenario for Black, i.e. if the minor pieces are exchanged and his c-pawn falls, the rook endgame is generally still a draw.

1D: Cutting Edge, 18 ♖ae3

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 h6 13 ♗c2 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 ♘d7 17 ♖a3 f5)

18 ♖ae3 *(D)*

This old line, seen in a few Kasparov-Karpov games in the early 1990s, seems out of favour for the moment.



18...♘f6

This is the main line and the most thematic move, continuing the plan of undermining White's d5-pawn. The pragmatic player may also appreciate its transpositional assets, as the position after 19 ♘h2 can also arise from the *18 ♘h2 ♘f6 19 ♖ae3* move-order.

18...f4!? is an enterprising alternative. Its soundness is supported by the fact that it has been played by Karpov. However, the fact that he never employed it against Kasparov could

indicate that he had some doubts about it after all.

a) 19 ♖3e2?! ♘e5 seems very comfortable for Black:

a1) Black's dream scenario unfolded in the game Dorer-Schulze, corr. 2002 after 20 ♘xe5 dxe5 21 b3 (Karpov gave 21 ♘f3 ♗d6 22 b3 as unclear, but that could easily transpose to the game and we prefer Black here too) 21...♕f6 22 ♗b2 ♗d6 23 ♘f3 ♗c8 24 axb5 axb5 25 ♖d2 g5 26 ♘h2 ♕g6 27 ♕e2 ♗d7 28 ♖c1 h5, when Black's attack with ...g4 was formidable.

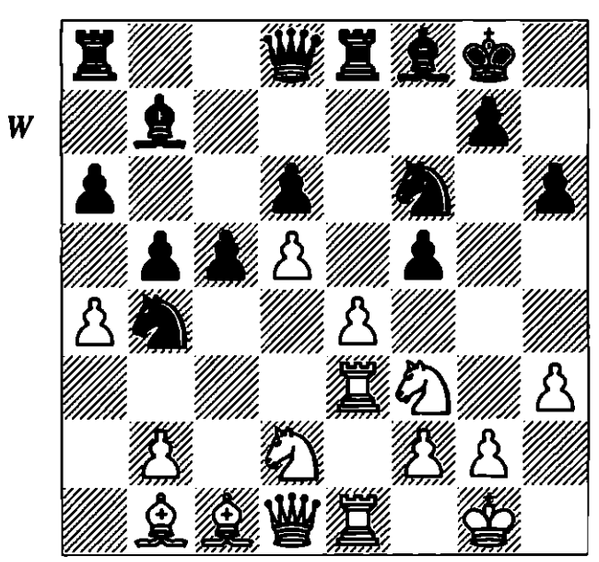
a2) 20 ♘f1 ♘xf3+ 21 gxf3 ♕g5+ looks very good for Black; e.g., 22 ♔h1 (22 ♔h2 ♕h4 –+) 22...♗c8 23 ♘h2 ♗xh3 24 ♖g1 ♕e5 25 ♗d2 ♘xd5 ∓ Bezgodov-Yakovenko, Tomsk 1998.

b) 19 ♖a3 is the main line:

b1) The immediate 19...♘e5!? 20 ♘f1 g5 is worth testing.

b2) 19...♕f6 20 ♘b3!? ♘e5 21 ♘a5 ♗c8 22 ♗d2 ♗d7 23 axb5 axb5 24 ♗c3 ♘a6 (24...g5!? is quite tempting, as White already has to take precautions against the ...g5-g4 thrust) 25 ♖a1 ♘c7 26 ♗c2 ♕g6 (not the positionally disastrous 26...b4? 27 ♗xe5 dxe5 28 ♗a4!) 27 ♔h1 ♔h8 and now Follić-He.Muller, e-mail 2000 ended in a draw by repetition after 28 ♘h4 ♕g5 29 ♘f3 ♕g6 30 ♘h4.

We now return to 18...♘f6 *(D)*:



19 ♘h2

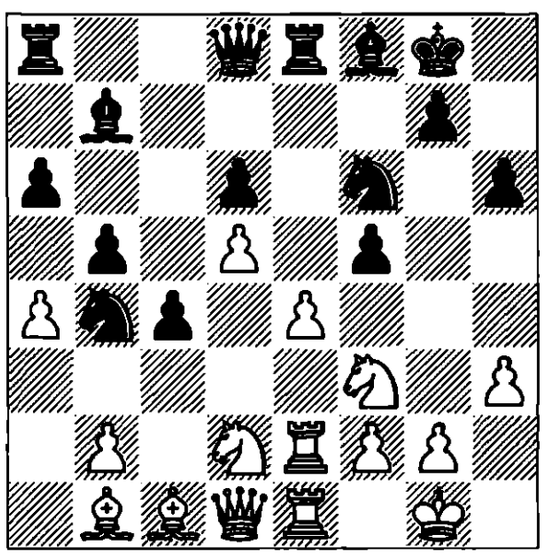
As already mentioned, this position can also arise from *18 ♘h2 ♘f6 19 ♖ae3*. Instead:

a) 19 exf5 is simply met by 19...♕d7!.

b) The quiet 19 ♖3e2 largely rules out ...f4 and somewhat improves White's coordination by opening the c1-h6 diagonal for the c1-bishop.

b1) We like the solid 19...♕d7, and after 20 e5 ♘fxd5 (20...dxe5) 21 ♘f1 ♘b6 22 e6 ♕d8 23 ♗xf5 ♕f6 24 ♘g3, it would be interesting to see the consistent 24...♗xf3!? 25 gxf3 ♘xa4 26 ♗g4 g6 with very double-edged play, rather than 24...bxa4? 25 ♗e4 d5 26 ♘h5 ♕d8 27 ♗g6 ♗d6 28 ♗f7+ ♔h8 29 ♗xh6 1-0 T.Ernst-R.Bjerke, Gausdal 1990.

b2) 19...c4!? *(D)* may be too risky:



b21) 20 e5?! dxe5 21 ♗xf5 ♘d3! 22 ♗xd3 cxd3 23 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 24 ♖xe5 ♗xd5 25 ♖e3 ♗c5 26 ♖xd3 ♕b6 27 ♕f1 bxa4 left Black obviously much better in the Scandinavian high-level battle T.Ernst-P.H.Nielsen, Gausdal 1991. *NCO*'s evaluation of 'equal' is hard to comprehend here. The bishop-pair completely dominates the scene. The fact that Fritz suggests such drastic measures as 28 b4? speaks for itself.

b22) 20 exf5 has to be the critical test: 20...♖xe2 21 ♕xe2 ♘bxd5 (21...♗xd5 22 ♘d4 followed by ♘e6 looks very promising for White) 22 ♘e4 (we cannot say we like this position for Black, but White has not been able to demonstrate anything concrete, so maybe it's not so bad after all). Now after 22...♘c7 neither 23 ♘d4 d5 nor 23 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 24 ♗e3 ♖e8 seems to promise White any advantage, so the critical line runs 23 ♗f4 ♗xe4 24 ♗xe4 d5 25 ♗c2 ♗d6, and now:

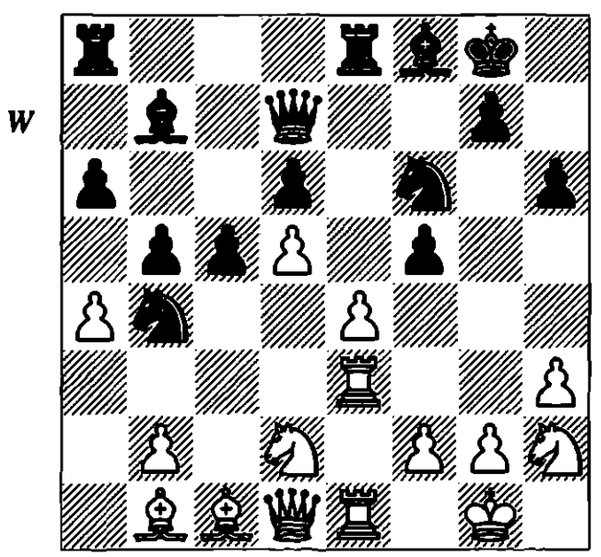
b221) 26 ♗d2?! ♕d7 27 axb5 axb5 28 ♗c3 b4 29 ♗xf6 gxf6 30 ♘d4 ♗e5 and Black had turned the tables in Russo-Sorroche Lupion, corr. 2002.

b222) If White wants to retreat his bishop, then 26 ♗e3 is definitely the best way to do it, but after 26...♕d7 27 axb5 axb5 28 ♗d4 ♖e8 29 ♕d1 ♘e4 Black is OK.

b223) 26 ♕d2!? is a much tougher test, but if Black finds 26...♕f8!, he should be doing fine.

19...♕d7 *(D)*

This was played by Karpov as an improvement over an earlier game in a world championship match. 19...♔h8 20 b3! bxa4 21 bxa4 c4 22 ♗b2! fxe4 23 ♘xe4 ♘fxd5 24 ♖g3 ♖e6 25 ♘g4 ♕e8? (25...♘d3! is better, killing the b1-bishop at once) and even though everything was not crystal clear after 26 ♘xh6! in Kasparov-Karpov, New York/Lyons Wch (20) 1990, White's attack was looking menacing at this point.



20 exf5

This seems more consistent than the alternatives:

a) 20 b3 fxe4 21 ♘xe4 ♘bxd5 (∓ *NCO*):

a1) 22 ♖g3? ♘xe4 23 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 24 ♖xe4 ♘c3 25 ♖xc3 ♗xe4 is a well-known trick, when Black is much better already.

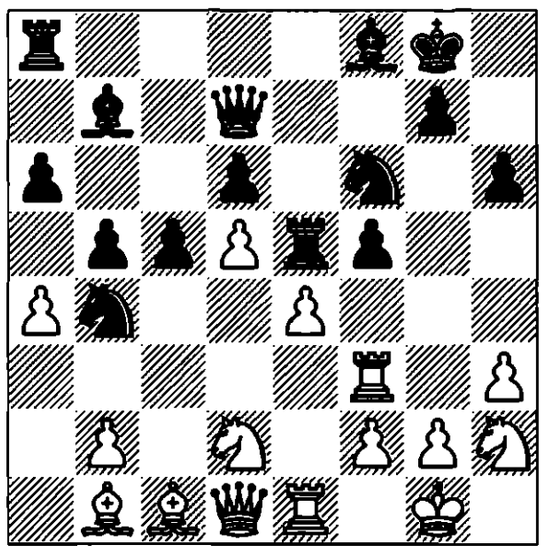
a2) 22 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 23 ♘g4 ♘xg4 24 hxg4 ♖xe3 25 ♖xe3 ½-½ G.Hernandez-Sisniega, Mexico 1991. The final position looks better for Black; e.g., 25...♖e8 26 ♕d3 (26 g5 ♖xe3 27 ♗xe3 ♕e6 ∓) 26...♖xe3 27 ♕h7+ ♔f7 28 ♕g6+ ♔e7 29 ♗xe3 ♕e6 ∓.

b) 20 ♖f3 and now:

b1) 20...♘xe4 21 ♘xe4 fxe4 22 ♗xe4 ♖xe4?? 23 ♖xe4 ♗xd5 24 ♖xb4 +–.

b2) 20...fxe4 21 ♘xe4 ♘bxd5 22 ♘g4 ♘xg4 23 hxg4 and White has the initiative.

b3) 20...♖e5 *(D)* and now:



b31) After 21 ♖xf5!? ♖xf5 22 exf5 ♗xd5 we have an interesting situation where, compared to Line 1B, the only difference is that Black's queen is on d7 instead of e7. This is of course a better version for Black, since his rook has rapid access to e8.

b32) 21 b3 ♘xe4 22 ♘xe4 fxe4 23 ♖xe4 ♖xd5 24 ♕e2 ♖e5 25 ♖xe5 dxe5 26 ♖g3 and *NCO* concludes that White has sufficient compensation. After 26...♖d8 27 ♘f1, Black has tried:

b321) 27...♕d1 28 ♕xe5 ♕xc1 29 ♕e6+ ♔h8 30 ♕g6 ♔g8 is an immediate draw, as in Brookes-Kratochvil, corr. 1999.

b322) 27...e4 28 axb5 axb5 29 ♗xh6 (29 ♗xe4 ♖e8 ∓) 29...♕d1 30 ♕b2 ♕d4 31 ♕c1 (31 ♕e2 ♕d1 repeats) 31...♘d3 32 ♗xd3 exd3 33 ♗e3 ♕b4 34 ♘d2 ♖a8 35 ♖g5 ♖a2 ∓ Oll-Hjartarson, Budapest ECC 1991.

20...♖xe3!?

20...♘bxd5 21 ♖e6! is very dangerous for Black; e.g., 21...♘f4 22 ♘g4! ♘xe6 (22...♘xg4 23 ♕xg4 doesn't help the situation) 23 ♘xf6+ gxf6 24 fxe6 and White has overwhelming compensation for the exchange, since Black cannot recapture on e6.

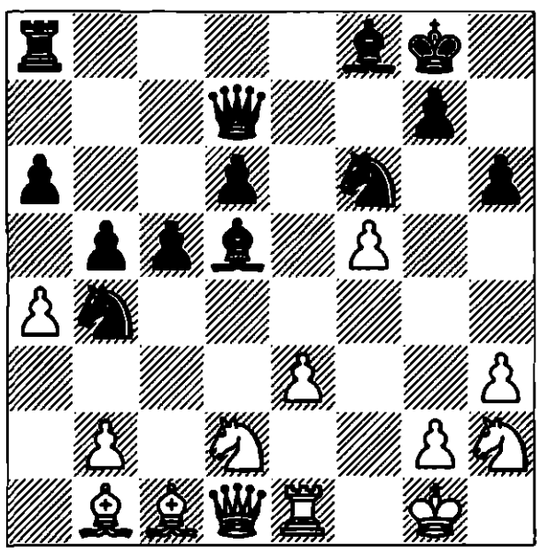
21 fxe3

So far we have not dealt with this structural change. White closes the open e-file but enhances his central influence. If there is a problem with this pawn-structure, it most likely is that the new e-pawn will block one of the diagonals toward Black's kingside whether it is on e3 or e4.

According to theory, Black is fine in this line, but this may be mostly because Karpov

was later completely winning against Kasparov. We believe Black should not lower his guard just yet.

21...♗xd5 *(D)*



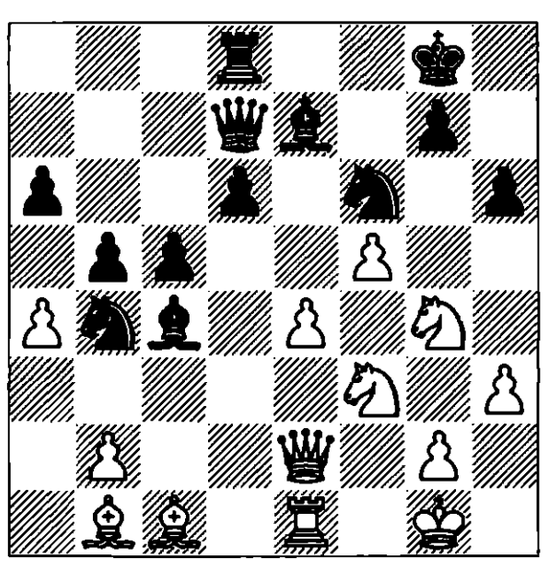
22 ♘g4 ♗e7 23 e4

It seems very natural to expand in the centre, but Kotronias is renowned for his thorough preparation, so his 23 b3!? should be considered. After 23...♘xg4 24 ♕xg4 ♗f6 25 e4 ♕e7 26 ♘f3 ♗xb3 27 ♗xh6 bxa4 28 ♗c1 followed by ♘g5, White definitely had compensation for the pawn and went on to win in Kotronias-Dervishi, Ikario 1997. Whether it was more than enough is hard to determine in the absence of further practical tests.

23...♗f7!

Here *NCO* assesses that the position is equal.

24 ♘f3 ♖d8 25 ♕e2 ♗c4 *(D)*



26 ♕e3

26 ♕f2 ♘xg4 27 hxg4 ♗d3 28 ♗d2 ♗xb1 29 ♖xb1 ♘d3 30 ♕g3 c4 31 g5 d5! 32 exd5 (32 gxh6 ♗c5+ was Black's point) 32...♗d6 33 ♕h4 ♗c5+ and White's king was in danger in Cadillon-Ruch, corr. 2000.

26...♘xg4 27 hxg4 ♗f6 28 ♗d2 ♖e8 29 b3 ♗f7

We believe White's initiative has come to a standstill and Black is the one on top.

Conclusion:

Black doesn't have any major problems in this line, and also has a very playable alternative in 18...f4.

Illustrative Game 3

Kasparov – Karpov

Amsterdam (Euwe mem) 1991

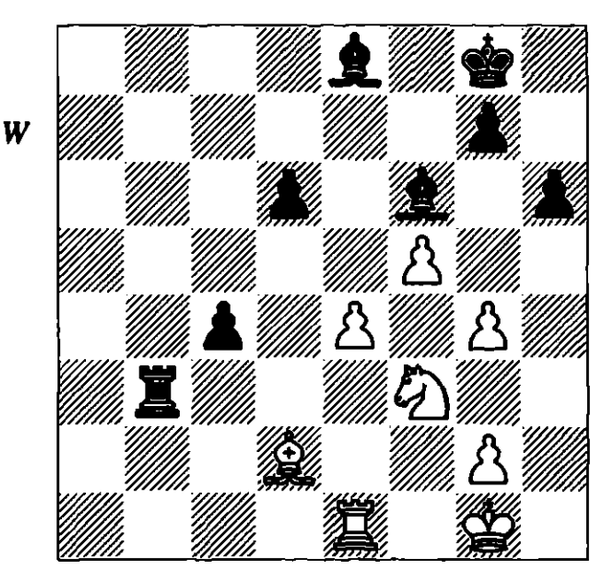
30 ♕f2 ♕e7 31 axb5 axb5

Karpov evaluated this position as clearly better for Black and the computers agree with this. White's attack has petered out and Black holds most of the positional trumps.

32 ♕f1

This meek move is a sign that things have gone wrong for White. Salov gives the principled 32 ♕g3 ♗xb3 33 g5 hxg5 34 ♘xg5, but we have great faith in Black's defensive resources after 34...♗c4.

32...♖b8 33 ♗d3 ♘xd3 34 ♕xd3 c4 35 bxc4 bxc4 36 ♕a3 ♖b3 37 ♕a8+ ♕e8 38 ♕xe8+ ♗xe8 *(D)*



39 g5

39 e5 dxe5 40 ♘xe5 c3 41 ♗c1 c2 doesn't improve White's chances. Black's bishop-pair supports his passed pawn very effectively.

39...hxg5 40 ♗xg5 ♗b2

Obviously not 40...♖xf3? 41 ♗xf6 and the opposite-coloured bishops ensure instant equality.

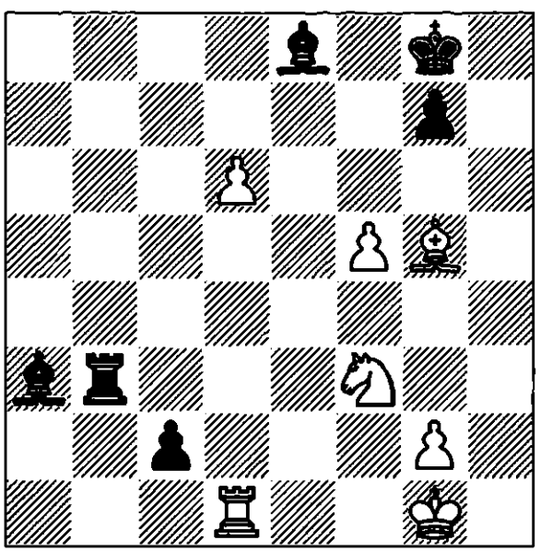
41 ♖d1 ♗a3 42 e5

There simply isn't time for 42 ♗e7? c3 43 ♗xd6 c2, when White can resign with a clear conscience.

42...c3

Black must avoid 42...dxe5 43 ♖d8 ♔f8 44 ♘xe5 c3 45 ♘g6+ ♔f7 46 ♘e5+, when White has a repetition.

43 exd6 c2 *(D)*



44 ♖d5

After 44 ♖e1 ♖b1, White is completely paralysed.

44...♖b1+ 45 ♔f2 ♖d1 46 ♖a5 c1♕

White can still fight on after 46...♗xd6 47 ♖a8 ♔f7 48 ♖c8.

47 ♗xc1 ♗xc1 48 ♖a6 ♖d5

Picking up the d-pawn immediately with 48...♗f4!? seems a simpler way to decide matters quickly. In the game this pawn will be a major annoyance for Black.

49 f6 g6 50 g4 g5 51 ♖a7 ♗f4 52 f7+ ♗xf7 53 d7 ♔f8 54 ♘g1 *(D)*

54...♖d2+?!

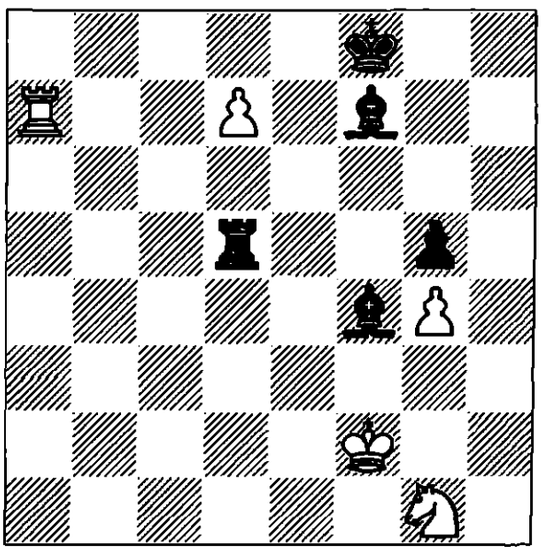
Black still had a simple win with 54...♗e6 55 ♘h3 ♗d2.

55 ♔e1 ♖d5?! 56 ♘h3 ♗d2+? 57 ♔e2 ♔g7

Could it be that Karpov missed 57...♗e6 58 ♖a8+ ♔e7 59 d8♕+! with an immediate draw in his initial calculations?

58 ♖a2 ♗c1 59 ♖c2 ♗a3

Here Ftačnik claims that 59...♗f4 60 ♘xf4 gxf4 61 ♖c4? is equal, but then Black has the strong 61...f3+! winning. Instead 61 ♖d2! draws on the spot.



60 ♘xg5 ♗g8 61 ♖c7 ♔g6 ½-½

Comments based on Ftačnik's and Salov's for ChessBase and Karpov's in *Informator 51*.

1E: Cutting Edge 18 exf5 and Rare 18th Moves

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 h6 13 ♗c2 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 ♘d7 17 ♖a3 f5)

18 exf5

This was debated in two Kasparov-Karpov games from their world championship match in 1990 in New York and Lyons, but is hardly seen any more. However, it would be silly not to prepare properly for it. Not only is it an extremely natural move, leading to very sharp positions, but it also leads to positions that are very typical for the 17...f5 Zaitsev. Studying them is quite likely to improve your general understanding of the entire variation.

Two other moves have been tried:

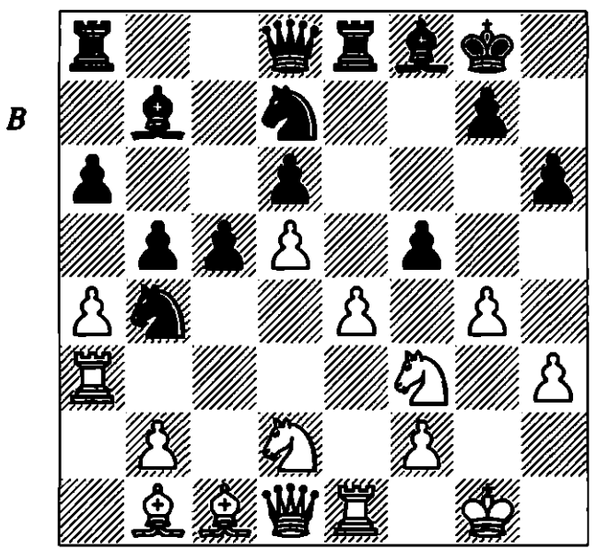
a) 18 e5!? dxe5 (18...♘xe5 19 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 20 ♖xe5 dxe5 21 ♗xf5 has been proved in practice to be an inferior version for Black, as the white rook now has a free path along the third rank; moves like ♖g3, ♕h5 and ♘e4 suggest themselves, with a formidable attack for White) 19 ♗xf5 ♘xd5 (19...♗xd5 20 axb5 axb5!? 21 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 22 ♘e4 gives White compensation) and now White can try:

a1) 20 ♘h2 c4 21 ♖g3 ♘5f6 22 ♘g4 ♔h8 23 ♗g6 ♖e6 24 ♘f3 was Wierzbicki-Blomstrand, corr. 1991 and now we must assume Black made a clerical error: 24...♘e4?? (24...♘xg4 25 ♖xg4

♗b4 is clearly better for Black) 25 ♗xe4 and White wins.

a2) 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 22 ♕b3 (22 ♘e4 c4 looks fairly solid for Black) 22...♗c6 23 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 24 ♘xe5 ♕f5 25 ♘df3 c4 and Black was taking over in Beaton-Mannion, Scottish Ch (Aberdeen) 1991. Giving up the light-squared bishop (even for a pawn) is generally not a good idea for White here. He has to play non-materialistically for an initiative.

b) 18 g4!? *(D)*.



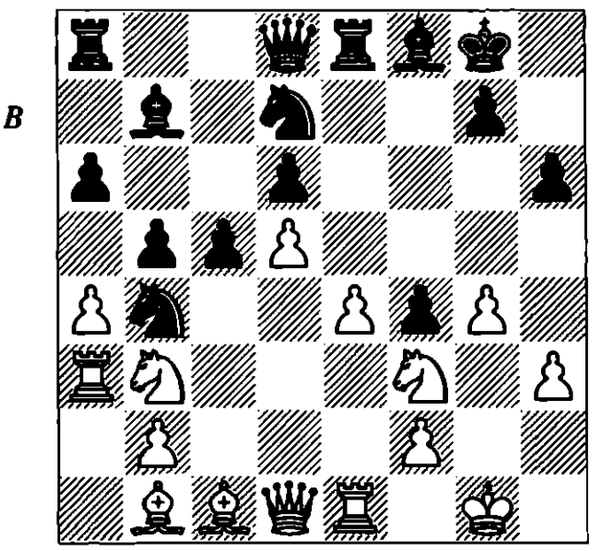
This is experiencing an upsurge after Kasimdzhanov convincingly beat Ivanchuk with it in the 2006 Olympiad in Turin. It is worth noticing, however, that only three rounds after this defeat, Ivanchuk repeated the variation against Anand, and the Indian deviated from the previous game, preferring the main line with 18 ♘h2 instead (see the Preface by Leif for this game). So Ivanchuk was obviously prepared to play this position again. Black has three responses:

b1) We believe 18...fxe4 is naïve. After 19 ♘xe4 followed by g5 White develops a strong attack.

b2) Ivanchuk chose 18..fxg4?! against Kasimdzhanov, but was firmly on the defensive after 19 hxg4 ♘e5 20 g5! ♗c8 (20...hxg5 21 ♘xe5 dxe5 22 ♕h5 is obviously not everyone's cup of tea) 21 ♘xe5 ♕xg5+ 22 ♖g3 ♕xe5 23 ♘f3 and White had a very strong initiative and went on to win the game in style.

b3) There only remains 18...f4, which was the choice in the only other practical example from this position. After 19 ♘b3 *(D)* (not 19 ♘f1 ♕f6 ∓ Almasi) there is a further split:

b31) 19...c4 and now:



b311) 20 ♘bd4 ♘c5 21 ♗xf4 ♕f6 22 ♗h2 ♘bd3 23 ♗xd3 cxd3 24 axb5 axb5 25 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 26 b4 (or 26 ♘xb5 ♕xb2 27 ♘c7 ♖c8 28 ♘xa8 ♖xa8 with compensation for Black – Almasi) 26...♘xe4 27 ♕xd3 ♗xd5 28 ♕xb5 ½-½ Hellers-Almasi, Malmö 1994. White has drastically weakened the h1-a8 diagonal, and Almasi even evaluates the position as slightly preferable for Black.

b312) 20 ♗d2! is a tougher nut to crack for Black; e.g., 20...cxb3 21 ♗xb4 a5 22 ♗d2 b4 23 ♖xb3 ♘c5 24 ♗xf4 ♕f6 25 ♗g3 ♘xb3 26 ♕xb3 and only White can be better, while after 20...a5 21 ♘bd4 ♘c5 22 axb5 ♘bd3 23 ♗xd3 cxd3 24 ♘c6 ♕b6 25 ♘fd4 ♘xe4 26 ♖xd3 White was in control in Shirov-Yakovenko, Spanish Cht 2006.

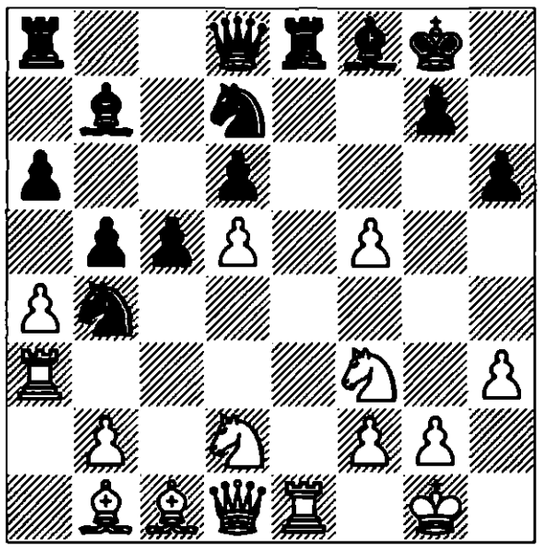
b32) Therefore we suggest 19...♘e5!? and in the absence of practical tests give some sample lines:

b321) Black's point is that 20 ♗xf4 can be met comfortably by 20...♘xf3+ 21 ♕xf3 ♘xd5, when he is absolutely fine.

b322) 20 ♗d2 bxa4! 21 ♘xe5 (worse is 21 ♗xb4 cxb4 22 ♖xa4 a5, etc., or 21 ♖xa4 ♘bd3 22 ♗xd3 ♘xd3, when 23 ♗a5 can now be met by 23...♕d7!) 21...dxe5 22 ♖xa4 a5 looks rather promising for Black; moves like ...♕b6, ...♗d6 and especially ...♗a6 suggest themselves.

b323) 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♖xa8 should probably be met by 21...♕xa8! avoiding ♗a5 tricks so that 22 ♗d2 can now be met with a knight jump to d3. Worse seems 21...♗xa8 22 ♗d2; e.g., 22...♕f6 (other moves are hardly better) 23 ♘xe5 dxe5 24 ♗xb4 cxb4 25 ♗d3 and we don't trust this rather static and rigid position for Black; his bishops have no scope.

We now return to 18 exf5 *(D)*:



18...♘f6

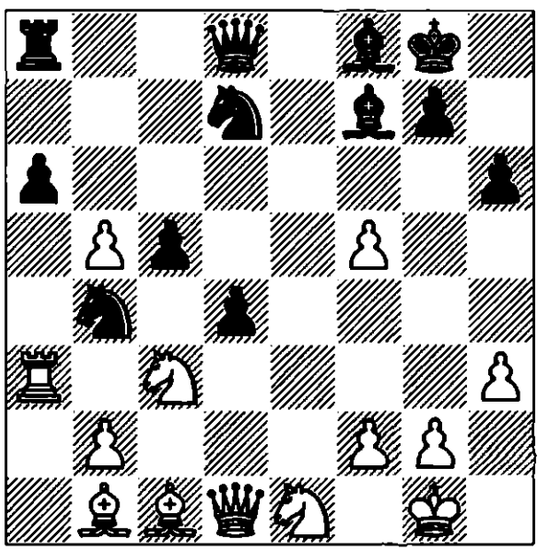
The d5-pawn is not going anywhere and Black's top priority now is to bring some forces to the defence of his kingside. The knight's main duty is stopping f6, which would let loose the b1-bishop.

a) Black should probably avoid 18...♖xe1+?! 19 ♕xe1 ♗xd5 20 ♘e4 ♗f7, when the instructive and powerful 21 f6! (control of this square is vital in this variation) 21...g6 (21...♘xf6 22 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 23 ♕e4 was Ivanchuk's point, with a lethal double attack; e.g., 23...♗d5 24 ♕h7+ ♔f7 25 ♗d2! with a winning attack) 22 ♘h4 d5 23 ♖g3! gave White a promising initiative in Ivanchuk-Brunner, Debrecen 1988.

b) In contrast 18...♗xd5 seems very playable:

b1) The famous game Shirov-Leko, Belgrade 1995 continued 19 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 20 ♖e3 ♕f7 21 ♘e4 bxa4 22 ♘fg5!? (the sacrifice should lead to a draw; after 22 ♕xa4, Shirov gives the plausible line 22...♖e8 23 ♗d2! ♗xe4 24 ♗xe4 d5 25 ♗b1 ♖xe3 26 fxe3 ♘b6 with unclear play) 22...hxg5 23 ♘xg5 and Black must play 23...♗b3!, when we have a rather unusual case of 'perpetual' on the queen (in the game, Leko lost after 23...♕f6? 24 ♖e6! ♗xe6 25 fxe6 with a decisive attack): 24 ♕f3 (24 ♕g4? ♕c4!) 24...♗d5 25 ♕d1 (25 ♕e2 ♗c4 26 ♕g4? ♘f6 27 ♕h4 ♕d5 28 ♖e6 ♕d1+ 29 ♔h2 ♗xe6 30 fxe6 ♕h5 −+) 25...♗b3 =.

b2) 19 ♘e4 ♗f7 (it should be noted that Karpov switched to this line after their first game; 19...♘f6 transposes to our main line) 20 axb5 (not 20 ♘xd6? ♖xe1+ 21 ♘xe1 ♘b6 22 ♗f4 ♘c4 and Black is winning) 20...d5 21 ♘c3 ♖xe1+ 22 ♘xe1 d4 *(D)* and practice has shown that Black has enough counterplay; e.g.:



b21) 23 ♘e4!? axb5 24 f6 ♖xa3 25 bxa3 ♘d5 26 fxg7 ♗xg7 is a variation from Karpov, when Black seems to hold on neatly.

b22) 23 ♗e4 ♖a7 (23...dxc3 24 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 25 ♕xd7 ♕e4 26 ♕d1 cxb2 27 ♗xb2 axb5 28 f6 is not quite enough compensation for Black) 24 ♘e2 ♘f6 25 ♗f3 ♕b6 26 bxa6 ♖xa6 27 ♖xa6 ♕xa6 28 ♘f4 ♘a2!? 29 ♗d2 c4 gave Black good compensation in Melnik-Kibalnichenko, corr. 1991.

b23) 23 ♘a2 ♘xa2 24 ♗xa2 c4! 25 ♖xa6 ♘c5! 26 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 27 ♗b1 d3 28 ♗e3 ♕a5 = Kasparov-Karpov, New York/Lyons Wch (22) 1990.

19 ♘e4 *(D)*

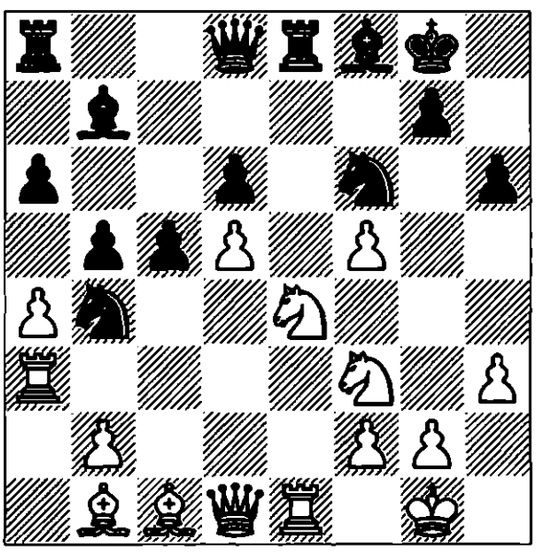
This is the most principled move, immediately starting to transfer pieces to the kingside.

a) 19 ♘h2 is discussed in 1C – *17...f5 18 ♘h2 ♘f6 19 exf5*.

b) 19 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 20 ♘f1 ♘bxd5 21 ♘3h2 c4 22 ♘g4 ♔h8 23 ♘fe3 ♘xe3 24 ♖xe3 ♕c6 25 f3 ♘xg4 26 hxg4 d5 and Black was in control in Comas Fabrego-Suarez Pousa, Oropesa del Mar 1996.

c) 19 ♖ae3 ♕d7 (19...♖xe3 20 fxe3 ♗xd5 21 e4 ♗f7 22 ♘f1 ♕d7 may be more solid) 20 ♘e4 ♘bxd5 21 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 22 ♖e6 (this rook proves hard to dislodge) 22...♕f7 23 ♗a2 c4 24 ♘d4 d5 25 ♗b1 b4 and here, instead of the meek 26 f3? ♗c5 ∓ Raidna-Simmelink, corr. 2001, 26 ♗f4! followed by ♗e5 is critical, when we are not sure that we trust Black's position.

d) After 19 axb5 (Bellia-Dervishi, Bratto 2003), we believe that Black should use the breathing space to exchange a pair of rooks: 19...♖xe1+ 20 ♕xe1 axb5 and as usual exchanges ease the defensive task. Black is ready to pick up the d5-pawn, with a solid position.


B

19...♗xd5

This clearly is the main continuation. Black brings a new defender to the kingside, but so does 19...♘bxd5!?, which has been tried in two games between Nick de Firmian and Alexander Ivanov, where White didn't get anything in either of them:

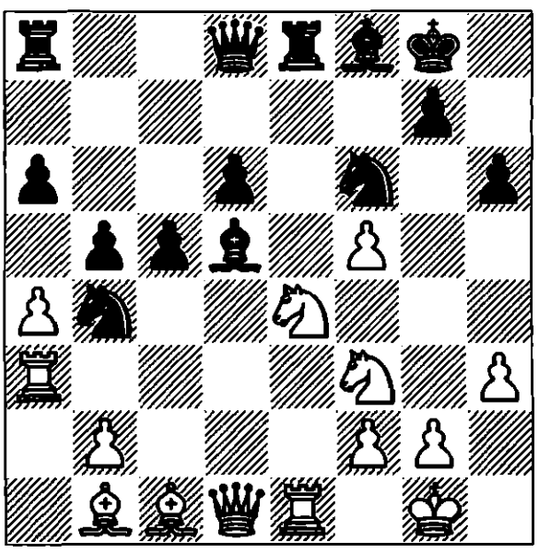
a) In the first game, which was definitely not Nick's day, Black was already comfortably better after 20 ♘h2?! ♘xe4 21 ♗xe4 and now the well-known trick: 21...♖xe4! 22 ♖xe4 ♘c3 23 ♖xc3 ♗xe4, de Firmian-A.Ivanov, Las Vegas 1989.

b) 20 ♘h4 ♘c7 21 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 22 ♘g6 ♖xe1+ 23 ♕xe1 ♖e8 24 ♖e3 ♖xe3 25 ♕xe3 bxa4 26 ♗a2+ ♗d5 27 ♗xd5+ ♘xd5 28 ♕e4 ♘e7 29 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 30 g4 ♕e5 31 ♕xe5 dxe5 was drawish in de Firmian-A.Ivanov, San Mateo rpd 1989.

c) More interesting is 20 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 21 ♖e6, which was tested in Bellia-Dervishi, Bratto 2002. After the natural sequence 21...d5 (certainly not 21...♗d5? 22 ♖xf6! +–) 22 ♘h2 c4 23 ♖g3, we think Black should have played 23...d4! 24 ♘g4 ♘xg4 25 ♕xg4 ♖xe6 26 fxe6 d3 27 ♕f5 ♕e7, when Black seems to defend, having blocked out White's b1-bishop. Losing the h6-pawn is a small price to pay for some exchanges, relieving the pressure. Instead, after the 23...♘e4? of the game, White could have developed a decisive attack with 24 ♗xe4! dxe4 25 ♕h5; e.g., 25...♖xe6 26 fxe6 ♕e8 27 ♕xh6 ♗d5 28 ♘g4! +–.

d) If there is a problem with the knight capture, it may very well be Karpov's untested 20 axb5 axb5 and now the slightly surprising 21 ♕b3! with an initiative for White.

We now return to the position after 19...♗xd5 *(D)*:


W

20 ♘xf6+

With this move White exchanges an attacker for a defender. It would seem that this shouldn't alter the balance in any way, but actually one factor that helps White in these lines is that it often proves easier to bring attackers than defenders to the kingside.

20 ♖ae3!? ♗xe4 (the cool 20...♗f7, as in Leite-Bastos, corr. 2001, looks solid as well) 21 ♗xe4 d5 (21...♘xe4?! 22 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 23 ♖xe4 is dangerous for Black, since he cannot play 23...♕f6? 24 ♖xb4! cxb4 25 ♕d5+) 22 ♗b1 ♖xe3 23 ♖xe3 (23 ♗xe3 d4 24 ♗d2 c4 comes to the same) 23...d4 24 ♖e6 d3 25 ♘e5 c4 was unclear in C.Horvath-Zoebisch, Balatonbereny 1988. Black's impressive pawn-chain keeps the b1-bishop locked away.

20...♕xf6 21 ♖ae3

White 'invites everyone to the party'. Alternatively he can try:

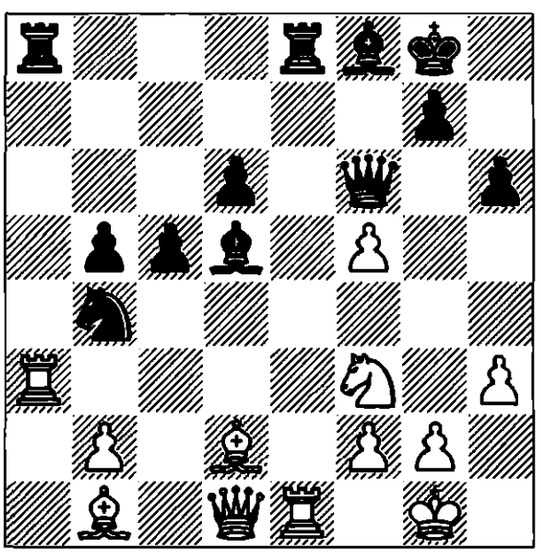
a) 21 ♗d2?! was an aggressive choice by Kasparov, trying to establish the bishop on the long diagonal and drive away Black's queen. However, it is probably not very good from a theoretical point of view; after 21...♕xb2! 22 ♗xb4 ♗f7!, *NCO* already concludes '∓'. Some possible continuations are:

a1) 23 ♖ae3 ♖xe3 24 ♖xe3 cxb4 and Black was clearly in control in Tolnai-Klovans, Vienna 1991.

a2) 23 axb5 ♕xb4 24 ♖xa6 ♕xb5 25 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 26 ♗e4 ♖e8 27 ♗d5 (27 ♖e3 keeps Black's advantage to a minimum) 27...♖xe1+ 28 ♘xe1 c4 29 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 ∓ H.Larsen-E.Poulsen, corr. 2000.

a3) 23 ♖e6!? ♕xb4 24 ♖b3 ♕xa4 25 ♗c2 ♖ad8 26 ♖be3 ♕b4 and not even Kasparov's attacking abilities could compensate for the four(!) connected black passed pawns on the queenside in Kasparov-Karpov, New York/Lyons Wch (4) 1990. However, Karpov later overlooked a win and it eventually ended in a draw.

b) Interesting is 21 axb5!? axb5 and now Kasparov's idea 22 ♗d2 *(D)*, when things are slightly different:



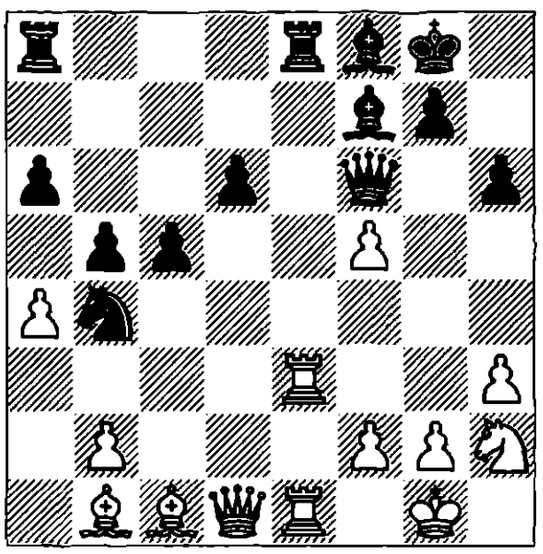
b1) 22...♕xb2 23 ♗xb4 ♗xf3 (23...♗f7? simply blunders a piece because of 24 ♖xa8) 24 ♖xf3 ♕xb4 is obviously very risky for Black, as the b1-bishop is a potential killer here. The computers don't really see the dangers and prefer Black, but we cannot recommend this position; e.g., 25 ♖e6!? with an attack.

b2) 22...♖xa3 23 bxa3 ♗xf3 24 ♕xf3 ♖xe1+ 25 ♗xe1 ♕b2 (unclear – *NCO*) 26 ♕e4 (26 ♗e4 d5! 27 ♗xd5+ ♘xd5 28 ♕xd5+ ♔h7 seems to work well for Black, despite the pawn deficit) 26...d5 27 ♕e6+ ♔h8 28 axb4 ♕xb1 29 bxc5 ♗xc5 30 f6 gxf6 31 ♕xf6+ (Rantanen-Ojanen, Finnish Cht 1990) 31...♔h7! =.

21...♗f7

Here the bishop covers some of the sensitive light squares on the kingside. After 21...♖xe3 22 ♖xe3 (22 fxe3!? intending e4 is also interesting) 22...♕f7 23 ♗d2 ♘c6, the thematic 24 f6! totally destroyed the coordination in Black's camp in O'Connor-Schulze, corr. 2002. Surprisingly often it is this move that signals a successful strategy for White. The point this time is 24...♕xf6? 25 ♗c3 ♕f7 26 ♗g6! +–.

22 ♘h2 *(D)*



At this point *NCO* concludes that the position is unclear – while we agree with this assessment, Black's next move must be carefully chosen in order to bear it out. The imbalance is a familiar one: Black is winning on the queenside, White on the kingside. In Black's favour is the fact that exchanges favour him. On the other hand, if White's strategy succeeds, the game is over!

It really should surprise no one if best play turns out to be a compromise where Black offers to degrade his pawn-structure in order to reduce White's attacking chances.

22...♕d4! *(D)*

This move is Azmaiparashvili's untested improvement. The natural attempt to simplify with 22...♖xe3?! 23 ♖xe3 may still be playable, but Black's prospects don't seem too bright when White's rook arrives on g3:

a) 23...d5 24 ♘g4 (it seems that after 24 ♖g3, 24...h5!? will slow down White's kingside attack considerably) 24...♕d4 25 ♕e2 followed by f6 looks scary from Black's point of view.

b) 23...♖e8 challenges White on the open e-file, but in this particular case that file has little relevance and White can abandon it:

b1) 24 ♘g4 ♕d4 25 ♕xd4 (25 ♕e2 ♖xe3 26 ♗xe3 ♗c4! or 25 ♕e1 ♖xe3) 25...cxd4 26 ♖xe8 ♗xe8 and the endgame is fine for Black;

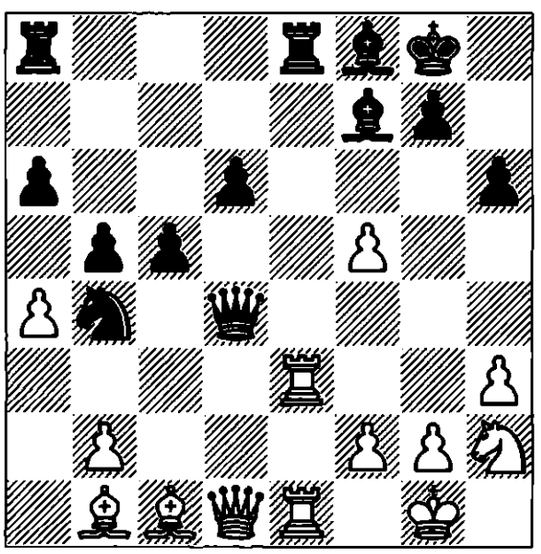
e.g., 27 axb5 (or 27 ♗d2 d5) 27...♗xb5 28 f3? ♗d3 29 ♗xd3 ♘xd3 ∓ Zungen-Uhlig, corr. 1999.

b2) 24 ♖g3! ♕d4 25 ♗d2 is troublesome:

b21) 25...♕xb2 26 f6! gives White a dangerous attack; e.g., 26...d5 (White's idea was 26...♕xf6 27 ♘g4) 27 fxg7 ♗d6 28 ♗c3 ♕e2 29 ♗h7+ ♔xh7 30 g8♕+ ♗xg8 31 ♖g7+ ♔h8 32 ♖e7+ d4 33 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 34 ♗xd4+ cxd4 35 ♕xe2 +–.

b22) After 25...♔h8 26 ♘g4 ♘d5, the by now familiar 27 f6! gives White an attack; e.g., 27...♘xf6 28 ♘xf6 ♕xf6 29 ♗c3, when White should be winning.

b23) 25...bxa4 26 ♘g4 ♔h7 (in Adams-Gaffar, Novi Sad OL 1990 Black collapsed with 26...♗b3?? 27 ♘xh6+ ♔h8 28 ♕h5 1-0) 27 ♕c1 ♗a2 28 ♗c3 ♕c4 29 f6+ ♗xb1 30 ♕xb1+ ♕e4 31 ♕d1 ±.


W

23 ♗d2!?

We have seen no mention of this move, but seen in the light of the lines after 22...♖xe3, it's a rather obvious way to avoid simplification and continue kingside play. After White has moved his queen, the bishop will be excellently placed at c3.

a) It is quite possible that White should take the chance to steer for a roughly equal endgame with 23 ♕xd4 cxd4 24 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 25 ♖xe8 ♗xe8, etc.

b) 23 ♕f3 ♘d5 24 ♖d1, with unclear play, is the line given by Azmaiparashvili. Black's tactical point is that after 24...♕xa4 25 ♖xd5, he has the resource 25...♕a1!. A relevant tactical line runs 26 ♗e4 ♖xe4 (26...♕xc1+? 27 ♖d1 ♕xb2 28 ♗xa8 +–) 27 ♖d1 (not 27 ♕xe4 ♕xc1+ 28 ♖e1 ♕xb2 ∓) 27...♖xe3 28 ♗xe3 ♕a4, keeping an eye on the d1-rook. Black's queen is far away from the kingside at the moment, but it seems that White cannot exploit this fact; e.g., 29 ♘g4 h5! or 29 f6 ♖e8 followed by ...♕e4 when Black defends.

23...♘d5!

This secures some exchanges, taking the sting out of White's potential attack.

24 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 25 ♖xe8 ♗xe8 26 axb5 axb5 27 ♕c2

Among other possibilities, 27...♘b4 with the idea 28 ♗xb4 ♕xb4 29 f6 ♕e1+ 30 ♘f1 g6 ∓ looks very satisfactory for Black.

Conclusion:

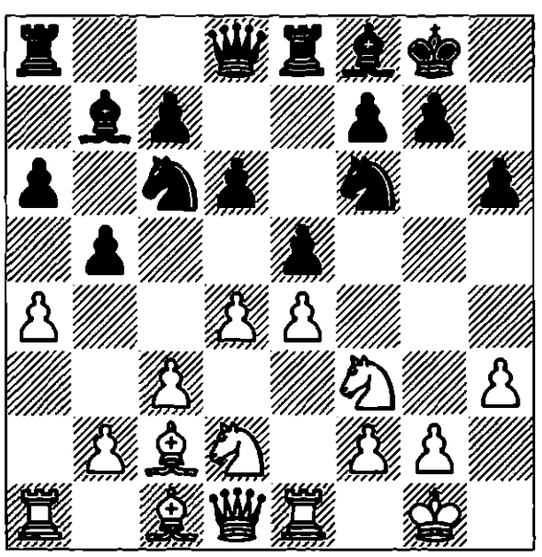
This line could do with some high-level testing, but for the moment it seems that Black only needs to find a few accurate moves to secure a very promising position.

1F: 17 ♘f1 and Earlier Deviations

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 h6)

13 ♗c2 *(D)*

Alternatives are considered in Line 1G.


B

13...exd4

13...♕d7 transposes elsewhere:

a) The very plausible continuation 14 d5 ♘e7 transposes to *9...♕d7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 ♗b7 13 d5 ♘e7 14 ♗c2 h6* (Line 5C).

b) 14 b3 exd4 15 cxd4 ♘b4 16 ♗b1 – *13...exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 ♕d7 16 b3* (below).

14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5

We believe it is essential to challenge White's centre immediately. 15...♕d7!? is playable but the combination of ...♕d7 and ...h6 appears somewhat illogical. The same position could in principle occur from the move-order *9...♕d7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 ♗c2 ♗b7 13 a4 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 h6* in Line 5B, but in that position very few players would be tempted by the h-pawn move.

a) 16 e5 looks premature. After 16...dxe5 17 dxe5 ♘h7 Black was already comfortable in Beliavsky-Smejkal, Sarajevo 1982, as the d3-square is painfully sensitive in White's camp.

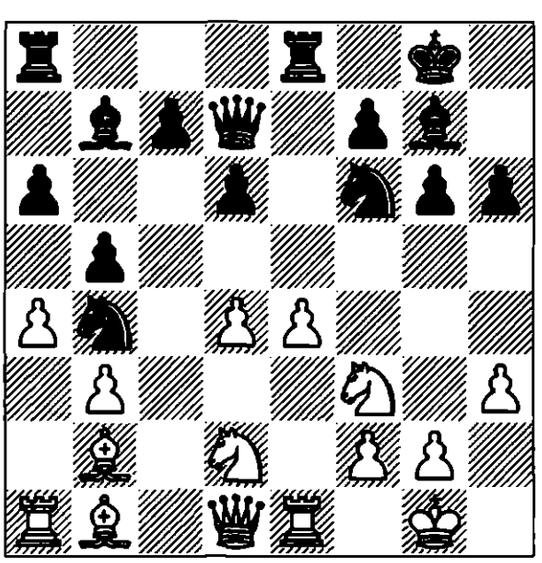
b) 16 ♖a3 bxa4 17 ♖xa4 a5 18 ♖a3 and now Black finally fights White's perfect centre with the thematic 18...d5!; e.g.:

b1) 19 e5 ♘e4 20 ♘xe4 dxe4 21 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 22 ♖xe4 c5 looks like decent compensation for Black.

b2) 19 ♘e5 ♕e6 20 ♖g3 dxe4 21 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 22 ♗xe4 ♖ad8 23 ♗f3 (or 23 ♗b1 ♕d5 24 ♘g4 ♘xg4 25 ♖xg4 g6, when Black defends coolly) 23...c5 24 ♗xh6 ♖xd4 25 ♕c1 ♕f5 and Black was better equipped for the coming complications in Ehlvest-Dorfman, Ivano-Frankovsk 1982.

c) Anand's preference with White was 16 b3 and now 16...g6 17 ♗b2 ♗g7 *(D)* with a split:

W



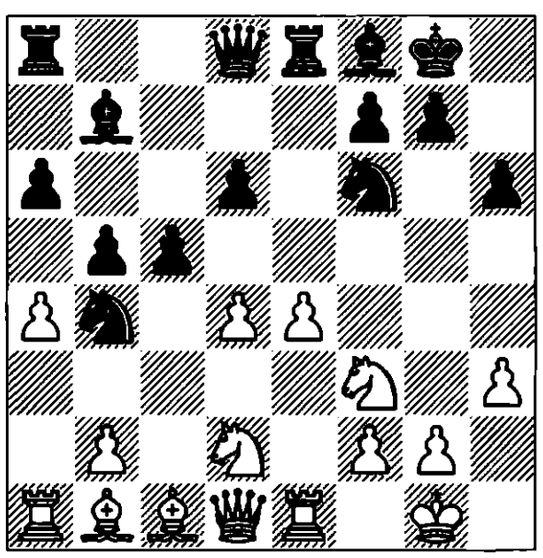
c1) 18 d5 c6! – Van der Wiel.

c2) 18 ♗c3 c5 19 d5? fails to the tactic 19...♘xe4! 20 ♗xg7 ♘xd2! –+ Knaak.

c3) 18 ♕c1 ♖ac8 19 ♗c3 c5 20 d5 ♕e7 (Black needs to get in the thematic ...♘d7!) 21 ♘f1 (21 ♕b2 ♘h5 22 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 is OK for Black) and in Anand-Kamsky, Las Palmas PCA Ct (9) 1995 (a match which, incidentally, contributed a lot to the theory of various branches of the Zaitsev Variation and to which we shall return in Chapter 2) the obvious 21...♘d7! (instead of the incomprehensible 21...♘h7? of the game) would have given Black a good game; e.g., 22 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 23 ♘e3 h5 with the idea ...♘e5.

We now return to 15...c5 *(D)*:

W



16 d5

Although it seems natural to grab space and cement the weak pawn on d6, White has tried a few alternatives that lead to a more open centre – mainly because Black is allowed to play ...d5. An opening of the position should generally favour Black, who is slightly better mobilized:

a) 16 ♖a3 appears to be a very flexible move, but seems to give Black easy equality after 16...cxd4 17 ♘xd4:

a1) 17...bxa4 18 ♖g3 g6 19 ♕xa4 ♕b6 20 ♘c2 d5 and Black was very active in Frolov-Petran, Siofok 1990.

a2) The typical sacrifice 17...d5 18 e5 ♘e4 19 ♘xe4 dxe4 20 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 21 ♖xe4 should be OK for Black; e.g., 21...♘c6 (21...♕d5!? 22 ♖g4 is slightly annoying for Black) 22 ♖g3 ♕d5 23 ♖h4 ♕xe5 (the calm 23...g6!? deserves attention too) 24 ♗xh6 ♕e1+ 25 ♕xe1 ♖xe1+ 26 ♔h2 (Kaisarević-D.Varga, corr. 1997) and now 26...♘e7! is a typical computer defence; e.g., 27 ♖hg4 ♘g6 28 ♗e3 bxa4 and Black is fine.

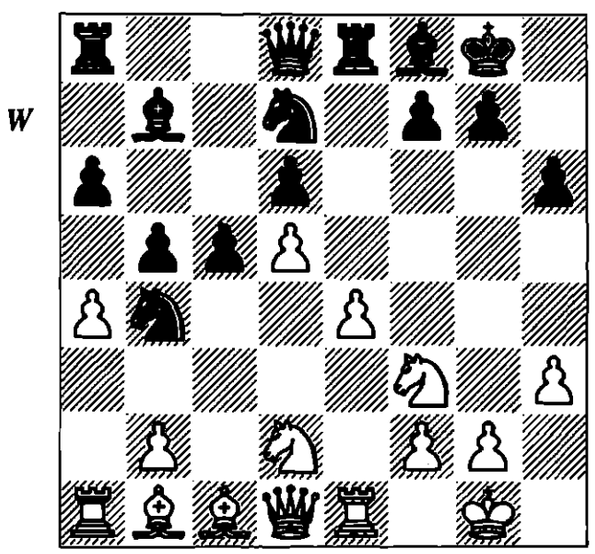
b) Also after 16 b3 cxd4 17 ♘xd4, it seems that Black has several paths to equality. We favour 17...♕b6 18 ♗b2 bxa4 19 ♖xa4 d5, when

NCO concludes that the position is equal. After 20 e5 ♘e4 21 ♘xe4 dxe4 22 ♗xe4 ♖xe5 Black is fine:

b1) 23 ♗h7+ ♔xh7 24 ♖xe5 ♕g6! is very risky for White; e.g.: 25 ♘f3? ♘d3 ∓; 25 f3 ♖d8! and all sorts of threats are looming over White's position. Flear gives 25 g4 ♘d3 26 ♖e2 ♗c5, when Black has compensation.

b2) 23 ♗xb7 ♖xe1+ 24 ♕xe1 ♕xb7 25 ♕e2 (25 ♘f5 ♘d3 26 ♕c3 ♘xb2 27 ♕xb2 g6 28 ♘e3 ♗g7 ∓ Cao Sang-Yakovenko, Budapest 1996) 25...♕d5 26 ♕f3 ½-½ Ki.Georgiev-Hjartarson, Groningen PCA 1993.

16...♘d7 *(D)*



We have already praised the virtues of this move in the introduction and can only add that the only real alternative, 16...g6, scores relatively poorly.

17 ♘f1?!

This looks very natural and has been played by some really strong players. White may hope to save a tempo at some point by exchanging rooks on a8 without any intermediate stop on a3, but compared to the main line, 17 ♖a3, it is a bit inflexible as the knight now is quite likely to spend two extra moves getting to e4.

Other alternatives for White are extremely rare:

a) 17 g4 stops ...f5 but looks unnecessarily committal since Black has an alternative plan: 17...c4 (17...g6 also looks sensible) 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 20 ♖e3 (planning b3) 20...♕c8 21 ♕e1 and then:

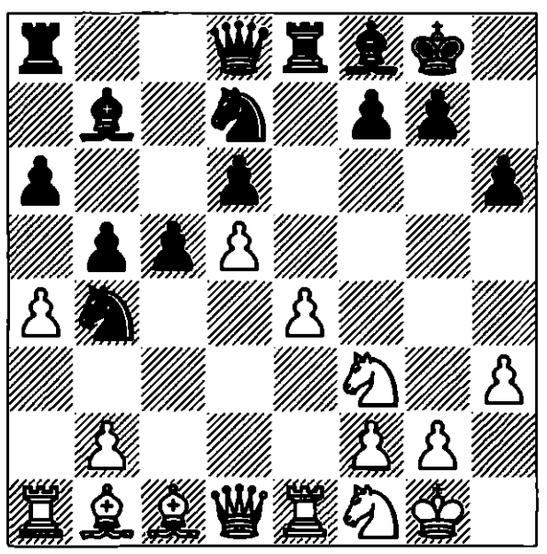
a1) 21...♘c5? 22 ♘xc4 ±.

a2) 21...♘e5!? 22 ♘xe5 dxe5 23 ♘f1 ♕d7 is unclear.

a3) 21...♘a6 22 ♘f1 b4 is unclear, Lutsko-Malinin, Novaya Ladoga 2002.

b) 17 b3 doesn't look too bad, but after 17...f5 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♖xa8 ♗xa8, White should play 20 exf5 ♘f6, with a fairly normal-looking position, rather than the incomprehensible 20 ♕e2?, which traded a centre pawn for a flank one in Erwich-Postman, corr. 1985. After 20...♘xd5 21 ♕xb5 fxe4 22 ♘xe4 ♘b4 Black was clearly better – partly due to White's misplaced queen.

We now return to the position after 17 ♘f1 *(D)*:



17...f5

Clearly this is the consistent move, but in order to understand why, and follow it up correctly, it is a great help to have had a look at the preceding lines on 17 ♖a3 f5 – something that not all 17...c4 players will have bothered to do.

18 exf5

18 ♘g3 hasn't been tested at a high level, but makes some sense. White loses a pawn and some tempi, but opens the light diagonal towards Black's weakened king position. We would expect White's chances to be of a mainly practical nature, but then tournament chess is mainly a practical game.

18...♘f6 *(D)*

This is the standard reaction to the capture of Black's f-pawn, not only bringing a defender to the kingside, but also physically blocking the f-pawn.

18...♖xe1 has also scored very well for Black: 19 ♕xe1 (19 ♘xe1 ♘xd5 20 ♖a3 ♘7f6 is unclear according to A.Sokolov) 19...♗xd5 and now:

a) After 20 ♗e4 ♗xe4 21 ♕xe4 ♕e8 Black has the better long-term prospects.

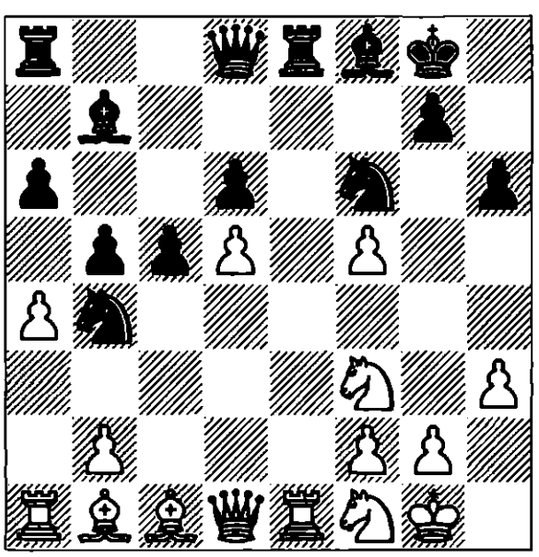
b) 20 ♕d1 ♘f6 21 ♗d2 bxa4 22 ♖xa4 a5 23 ♖a3 ♗f7 24 ♘1h2 d5 25 ♘e5 ♕c7 26 ♘hg4 ♘xg4 27 ♘xg4 h5 and although Black as usual has the better long-term prospects, it is hard to comprehend the desperate-looking sacrifice 28 f6? hxg4 29 ♕xg4 played in J.Horvath-Lukacs, Hungarian Ch 1986. We are not sure what White missed but after 29...♕e5 it was quite obvious that Black can defend and win.

c) White can also try 20 ♖a3 bxa4! 21 ♘1h2 (again 21 ♗e4 is met by 21...♗xe4 22 ♕xe4 ♕e8 ∓) when Black should show care:

c1) In Kosteniuk-Kariakin, Hastings 2002/3 Black tried 21...♗b3, which allowed White to start an interesting but possibly insufficient attack by means of 22 ♖xb3!? (22 ♘d2 ♕e8 23 ♕f1 ♕f7 ∓) 22...axb3 23 ♕e6+ ♔h8 24 f6 ♘xf6 25 ♘h4 g5. Here 26 ♘g4!? is the most dangerous, when Black's king looks rather lonely in the corner. In the game Black defended successfully after 26 ♘g6+ ♔g7.

c2) 21...♕e8! appears much safer; e.g., 22 ♖e3 ♕f7 and we believe Black is solid after, for instance, 23 ♘g4 ♗a2!?, eliminating some enemies.

W



19 ♗d2

This is a sensible developing move, but by no means White's only try.

a) 19 ♖a3 appears a little illogical as the position could well have been reached by the move-order *17 ♖a3 f5 18 exf5 ♘f6* (see Line 1E) *19 ♘f1?!*, but understandably no one has been tempted by that. Cilloniz Razzeto-Ruch, corr. 1998 continued 19...♘bxd5 20 ♘1h2 ♕d7 21 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 22 axb5 axb5 23 ♘h4 and now an interesting manoeuvre for Black: 23...♗e7!? 24 ♘g6 ♗d8 25 g4 b4 with the initiative. Black's bishop is aiming for the g1-a7 diagonal.

b) 19 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 20 ♘e3 ♘bxd5 21 ♘g4 and then:

b1) 21...♘xg4 22 hxg4 ♘f6 was Kindermann-L.Lengyel, Budapest 1985. Here 23 g5! was clearly the critical move, after which 23...hxg5 24 ♘xg5 ♕h5 25 ♕xh5 ♘xh5 26 ♘e6 looks promising for White as there is another white g-pawn longing to advance.

b2) 21...♗e7 looks more solid and gives Black excellent long-term chances.

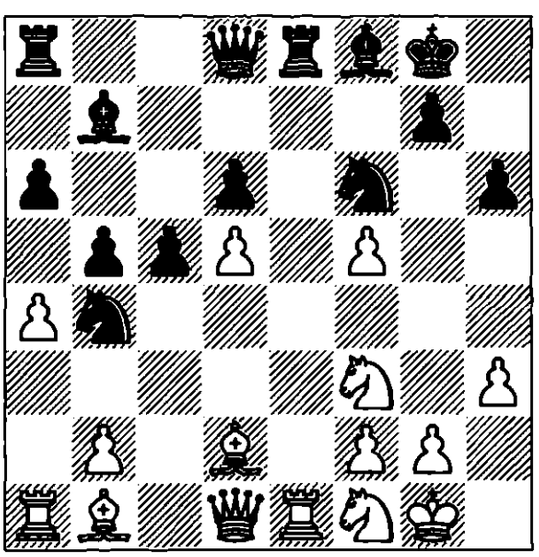
c) 19 ♘e3 has scored badly but could well be White's best. 19...♘bxd5 20 ♗a2 c4 21 ♘d4 and here:

c1) 21...♕d7 22 ♘e6 ♘c7 23 b3 ♘xe6 24 fxe6 ♖xe6 25 bxc4 bxc4 26 ♗xc4 d5 = Lamprecht-Frey Beckman, corr. 1998.

c2) 21...♘xe3 22 ♗xe3 ♕d7 23 ♕d2 d5 24 ♘e6 ♘e4 was completely unclear in V.Kuznetsov-Kliashtorny, Russian jr Ch (Vladimir) 2002: 25 ♕d4 ♖ac8 26 ♗xh6 ♖xe6 (26...gxh6? 27 ♖xe4 +–) 27 fxe6 ♕xe6 28 ♗e3 ♗c5 29 ♕d1 d4 30 ♗c1? (30 ♗xd4! ♖d8 31 ♗xc5 leads to a drawish position) 30...♕d5 31 ♕g4 ♖f8 32 ♗h6 ♖f7 33 axb5 axb5 34 ♕g6 ♗c6 35 b3 d3 36 bxc4 ♗xf2+ 37 ♔h1 ♕e5 0-1.

We now return to 19 ♗d2 *(D)*:

B



19...♘bxd5

There is no general rule about which piece Black should use to capture this pawn, but here 19...♗xd5?! 20 ♗xb4 cxb4 21 ♘e3 looks good for White.

20 ♘g3

20 ♗c2 c4 21 ♘e3 ♘xe3 22 ♗xe3 b4 23 ♘d4 b3 24 ♗b1 ♘d5 25 ♘e6 ♘xe3 26 ♖xe3 ♕f6 27 ♕d2 d5 is slightly better for Black, Overton-Asquith, corr. 1999.

20...♕d7 21 ♘e4 b4 22 ♘h2 ♘xe4 23 ♗xe4 ♘f6 24 ♗xb7 ♖xe1+ 25 ♗xe1 ♕xb7 26 ♘g4 ♘xg4 27 ♕xg4

Black seems to have everything under control after 27 hxg4 ♖e8 too.

27...♖e8

Black is excellently centralized and able to stop any attempt at a kingside assault.

Conclusion:

For the moment it's not even clear how White should achieve safe equality in the line 17 ♘f1?! f5.

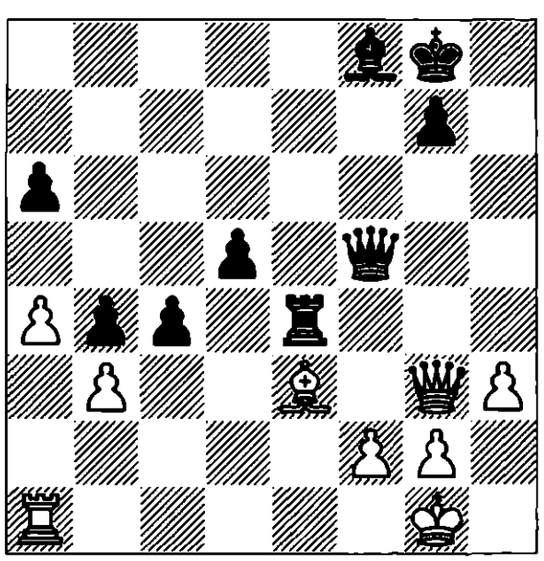
Illustrative Game 4

de Firmian – Beliavsky
Tunis IZ 1985

28 ♗d2

28 f6 is simply met by 28...♕f7.

28...♖e4 29 ♕g3 ♕d5 30 ♗xh6 ♕xf5 31 ♗e3 d5 32 b3 c4 *(D)*



This is a model scenario for Black: he has successfully parried White's assault on the kingside (mainly through exchanges) and now his central and queenside preponderance makes itself felt.

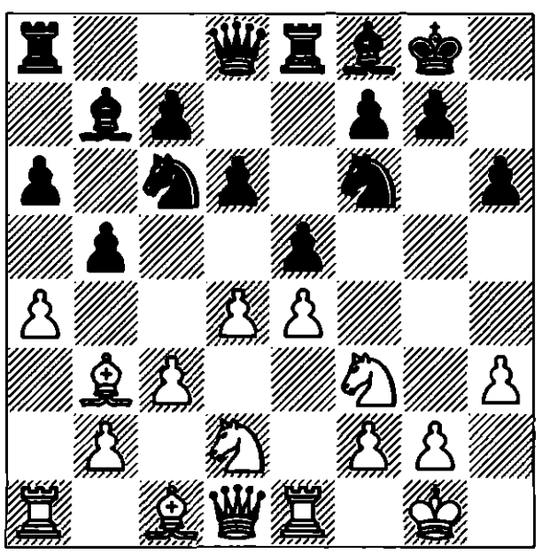
33 ♖d1 cxb3 34 ♖d2 ♕f6 35 ♕c7 ♖c4 36 ♕b7 ♖c1+ 37 ♔h2 ♗d6+ 38 f4 ♗xf4+ 39 g3 ♗xe3 40 ♕xd5+ ♔h7 0-1

1G: Rare 12th and 13th Moves

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4)

12...h6 *(D)*

The sensible alternative 12...♕d7 can be found in Line 5C under the *9...♕d7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 ♗b7* move-order.



13 d5

Closing the centre slows down the play for a moment. White can use this to complete the ♘f1-hop, but with the move a4 already in, he more frequently seeks to create play against Black's queenside, and the b5-pawn in particular. While d5 gains space with tempo, White releases the central tension and also allows Black the most easily arranged break, which will now be ...c6. Other moves are harmless:

a) 13 axb5 axb5 14 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 15 d5 ♘e7 ½-½ B.Ivanović-Gligorić, Yugoslav Ch (Subotica) 1984. In our opinion, Black is very comfortable in the final position and will follow up with a quick ...c6. After that he has good chances to achieve ...d5 as well, as he has excellent control over that square at the moment.

b) 13 dxe5 is rare. It is generally considered harmless in similar Ruy Lopez positions as after an eventual ...dxe5 the central situation is completely symmetrical. In Ioseliani-Gaprindashvili, Tbilisi wom Ct (9) 1980, Black chose to recapture with the knight, creating counterplay against White's e4-pawn: 13...♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 (14...dxe5 15 ♕f3 c5 should also be OK for Black; e.g., 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 18 c4!? b4 19 ♗c2, when White has trouble executing the positionally desirable ♘f1-e3-d5

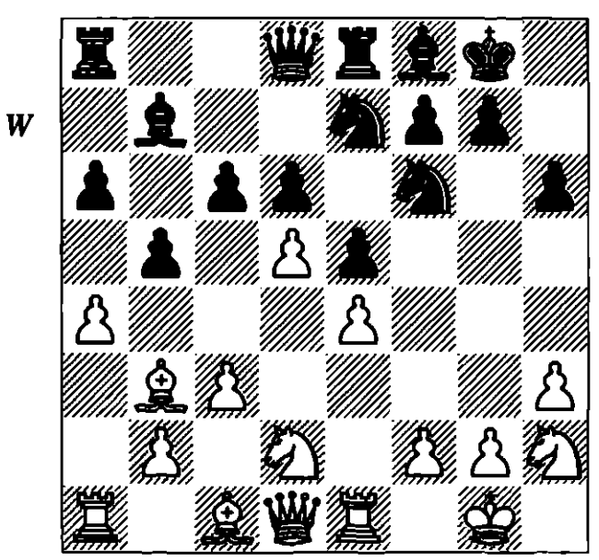
because of the pressure against the e4-pawn) 15 ♗c2 and here something like 15...♖e8 or 15...c5 looks natural, with an excellent position for Black. The pressure against e4 prevents White from completing his development harmoniously.

13...♘b8

Now the play will take on some Breyer characteristics – and even though White rarely plays d5 so early in the Breyer, it may well transpose. There have been various attempts to make the pawn sacrifice 13...♘a5?! 14 ♗a2 c6 15 b4 ♘c4 work, but for the moment it seems unsound. The sophisticated 13...♘a7!?, planning ...♘c8 and ...♘b6, has featured in some high-quality games and is probably playable, but it doesn't quite seem to equalize. So if the prospect of entering the Breyer annoys you, we must recommend 13...♘e7, which fortunately seems to work excellently:

a) 14 ♘f1 c6 15 dxc6 ♗xc6 16 ♘g3 ♘g6 looks OK for Black; e.g., 17 ♘h2 d5 18 exd5 ♘xd5 (18...♗xd5!?) 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 21 ♘g4 as in Shmuter-Liss, Rishon le Zion 1994 and here we recommend 21...♘b6 with an excellent position for Black.

b) After 14 ♘h2 c6 *(D)* White has tried:



b1) 15 ♘g4 as in Wolff-Shapiro, Philadelphia 1990, should transpose to line 'b2' after 15...♘xg4 16 dxc6 ♗xc6.

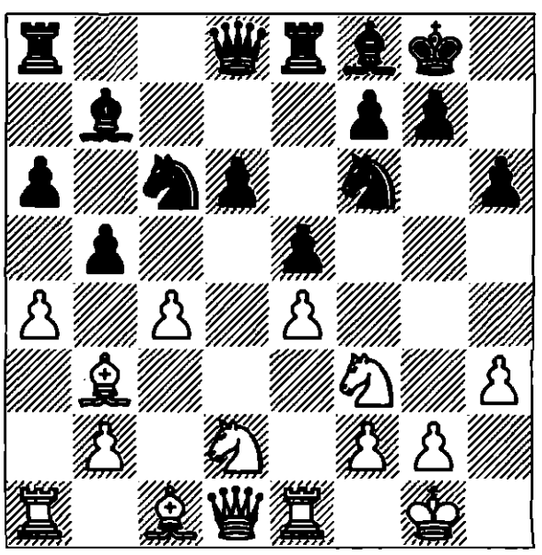
b2) 15 dxc6 ♗xc6 16 ♘g4 ♘xg4 17 ♕xg4 d5 and now:

b21) 18 exd5 ♘xd5 19 ♘e4 (19 axb5 axb5 20 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 21 ♘e4 ♖e6! followed by ...♖g6 and Black takes over the initiative) 19...bxa4! 20 ♗a2 (20 ♗xa4 ♘f6 also works well for Black) 20...♘f6 21 ♕g6 ♖a7 and Black defends.

b22) 18 ♘f3 bxa4 19 ♗xa4 dxe4 20 ♗xc6? (inaccurate, but 20 ♘xe5 ♗xa4 21 ♖xa4 f5 22 ♕h5 ♕d5 23 ♗f4 ♕e6 is also more than OK for Black) 20...f5! (a strong *zwischenzug*) 21 ♕g3 (21 ♕h5 g6 22 ♕h4 ♘xc6 is also much better for Black) 21...♘xc6 ∓ Kovaliov-Stefansson, Gausdal 1990.

c) In Bartsch-Scacco, corr. 1998 a dream scenario for Black unfolded: 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 16 ♕e2 c6 17 dxc6 ♗xc6 18 ♗c2 ♘g6 19 ♘f1 ♕c7 20 ♘g3 ♘f4 and with ...d5 coming, White is struggling just to keep his head above water.

d) 14 c4 c6 15 dxc6 ♘xc6 *(D)*.



At this point *NCO* concludes that the position is equal. From a purely theoretical view that is probably correct. However, it is useful to see a few examples of how play can develop. After 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 18 cxb5 ♘b4, a quick glance is sufficient to see that for the sacrificed pawn Black has tremendous positional compensation: his queen and bishop point menacingly down the long diagonal, in particular eyeing the e4-pawn. The knight is splendidly posted on b4, and the standard ...d5 break is on the agenda. There have been some practical tests of the position after 19 ♗c4 d5 20 exd5 e4:

d1) 21 ♘d4 ♗xd5 22 ♗f1 ♗c5 23 ♘2b3 ♗b6 24 ♗e3 ♘d3! 25 ♗xd3 exd3 and Black was pressing in Kazoks-Sapa, corr. 1995.

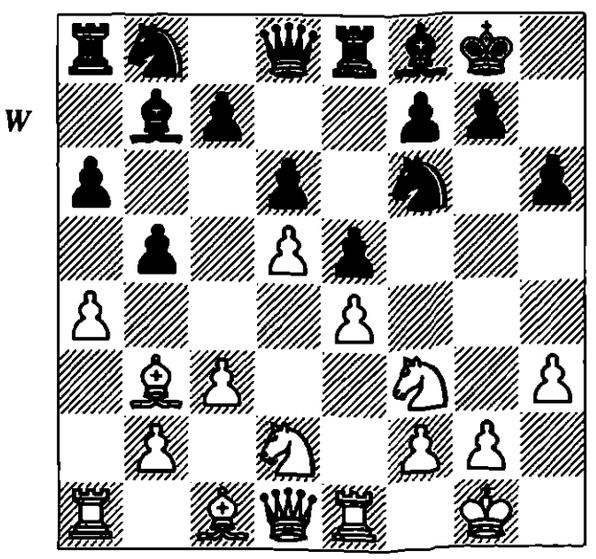
d2) 21 ♘h2 ♗xd5 and now:

d21) 22 b3 ♗c5 23 ♘g4 ♘xg4 24 ♕xg4 ♖e6! 25 ♗b2 ♖g6 26 ♖a1 ♕xa1+ 27 ♗xa1

♖xg4 28 hxg4 e3 –+ C.Horvath-Petran, Budapest 1987.

d22) 22 ♘g4 ♘xg4 23 ♕xg4 ♘d3 (the alternative 23...♗xc4 24 ♘xc4 ♘d3 25 ♖f1 ♕d5 26 b3 was also excellent for Black in Mestel-Short, Esbjerg 1984; he could now have considered 26...♕xb5!? 27 ♗xh6 ♕xb3, as White's 'attack' on the kingside quickly peters out) 24 ♗xd3 exd3 25 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 26 ♘f1 ♕xb5 27 ♗xh6 ♕xb2 28 ♗d2 ♕b1 and Black is the only one with winning chances, C.Garcia-Jimenez, corr. 1999.

We now return to 13...♘b8 *(D)*:



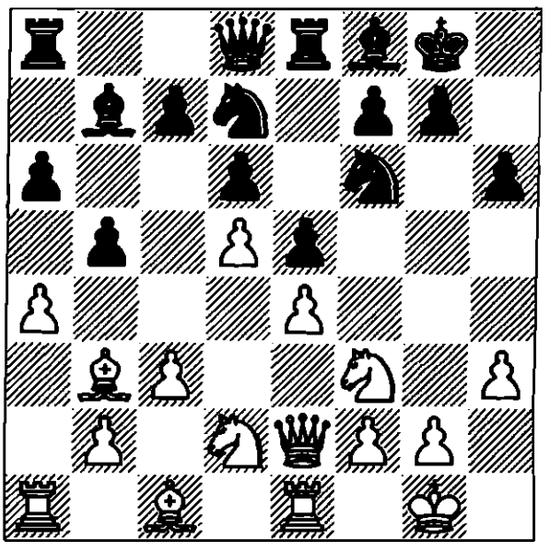
14 c4

White attacks b5, protects d5 and fights for control over c4. Otherwise:

a) Conservative play from White shouldn't worry Black too much as he has a flexible position with a lot of potential; e.g., 14 ♘f1 ♘bd7 15 ♘g3 c6 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 ♗e3 ♘c5 and Black had nothing to complain about in Short-Psakhis, Hastings 1987/8. The Englishman started very concrete play at this point, but the balance was never disturbed: 18 ♗xc5 dxc5 19 ♕xd8 ♖axd8 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♖a6 ♗d7 22 c4 ♗e6 23 ♖xe6!? ♖xe6 24 cxb5 ♖ee8 25 ♖a1 c4! 26 ♗xc4 ♗c5, when the exchange sacrifice was sufficient for equality, but nothing more.

b) 14 ♕e2 poses a question to the stranded pawn on b5 and practically forces a sacrifice with 14...♘bd7! *(D)*. Then:

b1) 15 ♘h2 is harmless: 15...c6 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 ♘g4 ♘xg4 18 ♕xg4 ♘f6 19 ♕g3 ♕d7 20 ♗c2 ♕b7 21 b4 ♖ad8 22 axb5 axb5 23 f3 and in Fleetwood-Piccardo, corr. 1999 White's feeble play was punished with the logical thrust



23...d5!, after which Black was substantially better.

b2) 15 c4 doesn't challenge Black either after 15...♘c5 16 ♗c2 bxc4 17 ♕xc4 c6 18 dxc6 ♗xc6 19 b3 (or 19 b4 d5! and the tactics work in favour of Black) 19...♗b7 20 ♕f1 d5! 21 exd5 e4! with a powerful initiative in Schuster-Klausen, corr. 2000.

b3) Another harmless line is 15 ♗c2 c6 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♖xa8 ½-½ Szuecs-Webb, corr. 2001. After 18...♕xa8 we have a typical situation where Black has good control of d5 and excellent chances.

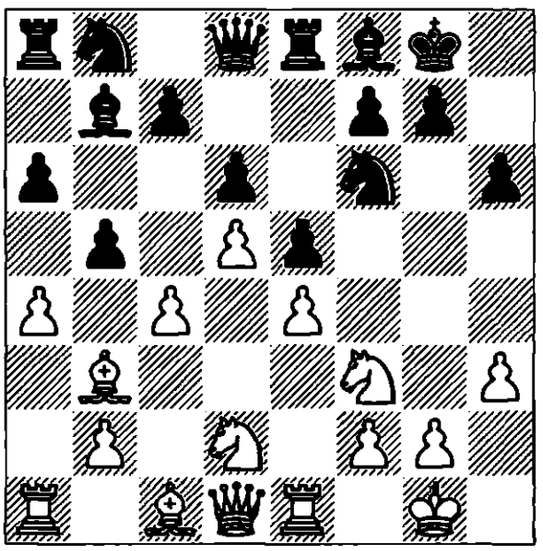
b4) Obviously 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 17 ♕xb5 must be the critical test of Black's play, but even this seems to work very well for Black; e.g., 17...♘c5 18 ♗c2 ♗a6 19 ♕a5 ♗d3 20 ♕xa8 ♖xa8 and White has not been able to prove an advantage in this endgame: 21 b4 (21 ♗xd3 ♘xd3 22 ♖d1 ♘c5, as in Kindermann-Lukacs, Austria 1995, probably should lead to a draw by repetition) 21...♗xc2 22 bxc5 with these possibilities:

b41) A drawish line is 22...dxc5 23 ♘xe5 ♖e8; e.g., 24 f4 ♗d6 25 ♗b2 (25 c4 ♗xe5 26 fxe5 ♘xe4! 27 ♘xe4 ♖xe5 28 ♗f4 ♖xe4 29 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 30 ♗xc7 ♔f8 =) 25...♘h5 26 ♖c1 ♘xf4 27 ♖xc2 ♗xe5 = Kaufman-Sashikiran, Hampstead 1998.

b42) 22...♘d7 23 cxd6 cxd6 24 ♘f1 ♘c5 25 ♘g3 ♖a4 and in Jansa-Z.Almasi, Austria 1995 Black had at least equality.

White has other ideas to try, but even the computers trust Black's positional compensation in these lines.

We now return to the position after 14 c4 *(D)*:



14...c6!?

This leads to very sharp play. The alternative is 14...bxc4:

a) 15 ♗xc4 c6 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 b3 ♘bd7 worked out fine for Black in Palac-Sonntag, Toulouse 1990.

b) 15 ♘xc4 is more critical: 15...c6 16 dxc6, and here:

b1) 16...♗xc6 and now:

b11) 17 ♕c2?! was played in Svidler-Morozevich, Moscow 1996, but we can see nothing wrong with 17...♗xe4!.

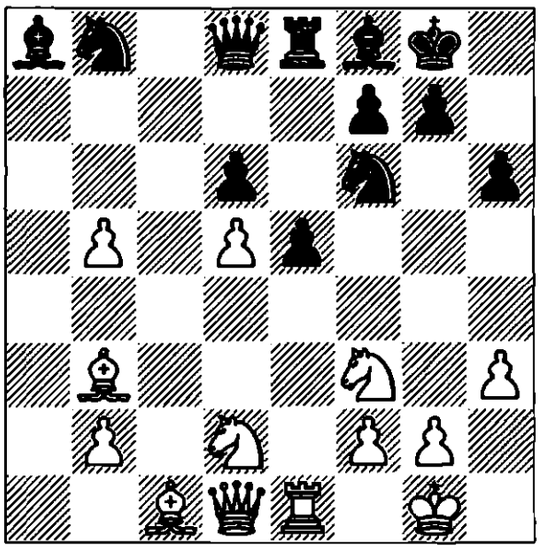
b12) 17 ♗c2 is better; e.g., 17...♕c7 18 ♗d2 ♘bd7 19 ♘a5 ♖ab8 (an improvement over 19...♘c5 20 b4 ♘e6 21 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 22 ♗d3 ♕d7 23 ♖b1 ± Krakops-Nayer, Zagan jr Wch 1997) 20 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 21 b4, when we are not sure if we trust Black's position. It must be said, however, that the computers have no such qualms and advocate 21...d5 22 exd5 ♕xd5 with a good game for Black. Still, a human player immediately spots the infamous Spanish bishop which is unchallenged and a potential killer after, e.g., 23 ♗b3.

b2) Flear prefers the less tested 16...♘xc6, which indeed seems simpler. Seemingly it slackens the pressure on d5, but that turns out to be illusory: 17 a5 (17 ♗e3 d5 ∓) 17...♖b8 18 ♗d2 ♘d4! 19 ♗a4 ♘xf3+ 20 ♕xf3 ♖e6 21 ♘b6 d5 gave Black the initiative in Ma.Tseitlin-Szymczak, Gdynia 1989.

15 axb5 axb5 16 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 17 cxb5

17 dxc6 bxc4 18 ♗xc4 ♘xc6 19 b3 hardly poses any problems for Black; e.g., 19...♕b6 20 ♗b2 g6 21 ♗c3 ♘d4!? 22 ♗d3 ♘e6 23 ♘c4 ♕c6 24 ♘fd2 ♗g7 = Mrugala-Christov, corr. 1999.

17...cxd5 18 exd5 *(D)*



This is a critical position for the evaluation of the entire 13 d5 ♘b8 variation. Black has a central advantage, with two pawns versus zero. Actually the whole pawn-structure is much better for Black, so White has to play dynamically with his pieces to compensate for this long-term disadvantage. We believe Black can successfully parry White's immediate assault and then cruise in on his positional trumps.

18...♘xd5

Leaving White with his mighty 'Spanish bishop' on b3 is a risky business. In *Informator*, Svidler gave 18...♗xd5 19 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 as the safer option for Black, with the following plausible lines:

a) 20 ♘e4 ♘b4 21 ♘c3 ♘d7 22 ♖e4 ♕a5 with an unclear position according to Svidler.

b) 20 ♘c4 ♘b6 (20...♘f6!?) and now:

b1) 21 ♘fxe5 ♕c7! 22 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 23 ♘f3 ♖xe1+ 24 ♕xe1 ♕xb5 with equality.

b2) After 21 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 22 ♕d5 there will be a sharp struggle between White's passed b-pawns and Black's blocked centre pawns. Svidler gave 22...♘d7 23 ♗e3 ♕b8 intending ...♘f6 and ...d5 as unclear. This has later had a practical outing in Sudakova-Pisakov, Russia 2002: 24 ♖c1 ♘f6 25 ♕b3 ♕b7 (the natural 25...d5 runs into the annoying 26 ♖c6!? with the point 26...d4 27 ♗xh6!) 26 b6 ♘d5 (now 26...d5 would be met with 27 ♖c7!) 27 ♕b5 ♖b8 28 ♖c6 ♘xe3 29 fxe3 ♕d7 30 e4, when White's positional advantage was beyond doubt. This example shows that Black has not yet reached a completely safe harbour with ...♗xd5 either. We believe the text-move is not so grim

for Black, but it must be followed up accurately.

19 ♘e4 ♘b4?

This is a real mistake, as White can now produce some amazing fireworks. 19...♘f6! is correct, when Black's position is quite solid after 20 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6:

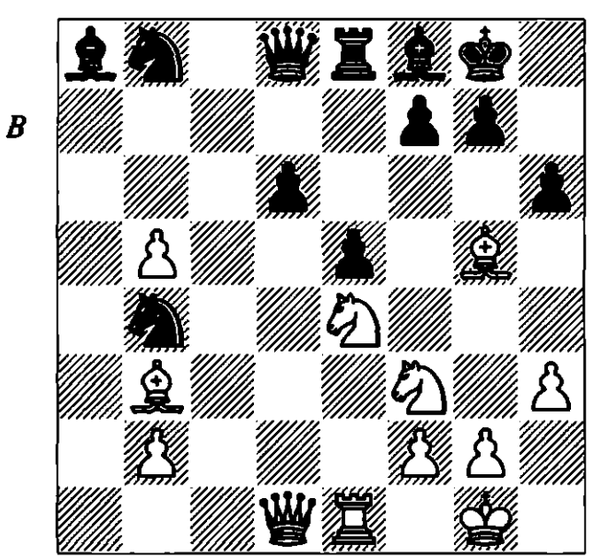
a) Svidler gave 21 ♗d5 ♘d7 22 ♗e3 with a small advantage for White. We cannot agree with that evaluation after 22...♗xd5 23 ♕xd5 ♕e6; e.g., 24 ♕xe6 fxe6 or 24 ♕c6 d5! in both cases with satisfactory play for Black.

b) 21 ♘h2 looks too slow. After 21...♘d7 22 ♘g4 there is a further split:

b1) 22...♕h4?! didn't work out too well for Black in Haznedaroglu-Dervishi, Calvia OL 2004 as after 23 ♗d5 ♗xd5 24 ♕xd5 h5 25 ♘e3, White had a firm grip on the light squares in the centre and the b-pawn was suddenly a dangerous passer.

b2) Instead we recommend 22...♕g6! 23 ♗d5 (after 23 ♘e3, 23...e4!? intending ...♘e5 is interesting) 23...♗xd5 24 ♕xd5 ♕e6 25 ♘e3 ♖b8 which looks good for Black. White will have headaches about his b5-pawn very soon.

20 ♗g5! *(D)*



This powerful move isn't really hard to calculate once you discover it. Now White has a decisive attack.

Conclusion:

Black has so far experienced some problems in this line. We have pointed out a few possible improvements for Black – see for example the notes to Black's 18th and 19th moves – but please bear in mind that they are very lightly tested and check them carefully before employing them in an important game.

Illustrative Game 5

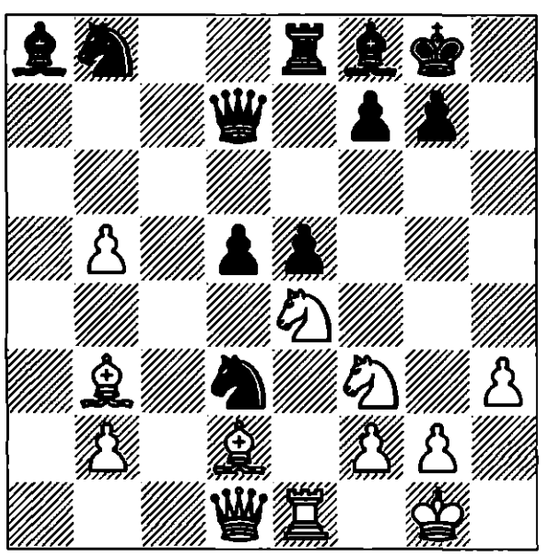
Svidler – Grishchuk
Panormo ECC 2001

20...♕d7

No better is 20...hxg5 21 ♘fxg5 followed by ♕h5 or 20...♕c7 21 ♗xh6!.

21 ♗xh6 d5 22 ♗d2 ♘d3 *(D)*

The cute point was 22...dxe4 23 ♘g5 ♘d5 (23...♗d5 24 ♗xb4) 24 ♕h5 ♕f5 25 g4! (the only way!) 25...♕g6 26 ♕xg6 fxg6 27 ♖a1 ♗b7 28 ♖a7 and White wins.



23 ♘fg5! ♕f5

23...♘xe1 doesn't work because of 24 ♕h5 ♕f5 25 ♘f6+! gxf6 26 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 27 ♕xe8 fxg5 and now the simplest is 28 ♗xe1 with a winning advantage for White.

24 ♖e3 ♘xf2 25 ♕f1 f6 26 ♖f3 ♕g6 27 ♖xf2 fxg5

Black deserves credit for finding his way through the highly tactical labyrinth and managing to maintain the material equilibrium so far, but now comes a lethal double attack which puts the last nail in the coffin:

28 ♕d3!

Threatening ♘f6+ as well as the d-pawn. Black finally has to part with material.

28...♔h8 29 ♗xd5 ♗c5

No better is 29...♖d8 30 ♗xa8! ♖xd3 31 ♖xf8+ ♔h7 32 ♘xg5+, etc., or 29...♗xd5 30 ♕xd5, and White has a dominant position.

30 ♗xa8 ♗xf2+ 31 ♔xf2 1-0

2 The 17...c4 Zaitsev

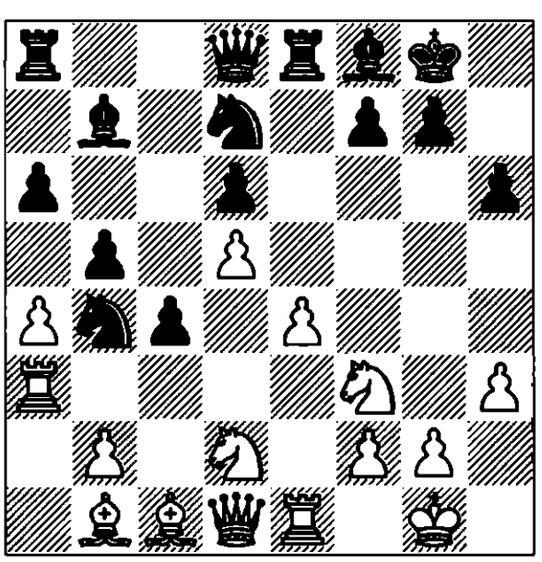
Even if 17...f5 looks very respectable for the moment, the lines are extremely sharp. Although we consider it unlikely that it will be refuted in a strict sense, there is a very real risk that for some time – following an improvement for White – it might prove very hard to defend for Black. So whether you dislike having your king under fire as in the previous lines or you need a back-up line while waiting for a GM proponent of the 17...f5 line to come up with a needed improvement for Black, 17...c4 is a nice line to have in your armoury. We therefore present the material in this chapter as an 'optional extra' that you may wish to examine.

Introduction and Overview

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 h6 13 ♗c2 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 ♘d7 17 ♖a3)

17...c4 *(D)*

W



This was Karpov's early choice versus Kasparov in the Zaitsev. Only later did he switch to the fascinating 17...f5.

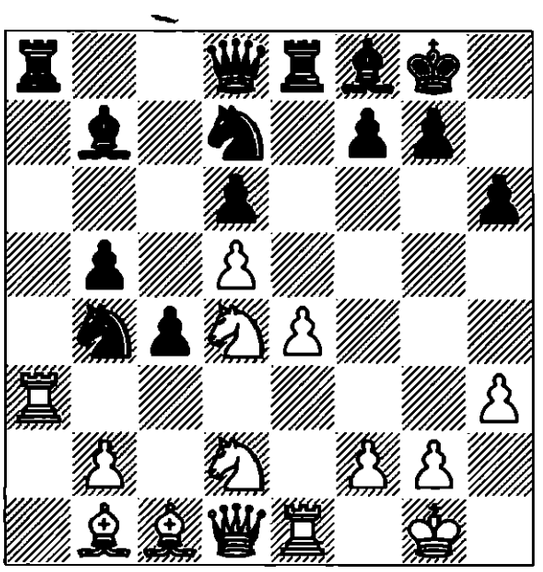
In a way the resulting positions are just as uncompromising, but Black will rarely get mated quickly.

18 axb5

Why would White open the a-file, which surely must be in Black's interest? The answer is a purely tactical one. Anand-Kamsky, Las Palmas PCA Ct (5) 1995 continued 18 ♘d4 (see Line 2B) 18...♕f6 19 ♘2f3 and now 19...♘d3!? 20 ♗xd3 b4, when White had to sacrifice an exchange with 21 ♗xc4 in order to retain the initiative. This proved sufficient for equality but no more than that. Consequently in the 7th game of that match Anand switched to 18 axb5 axb5 and only then 19 ♘d4.

18...axb5 19 ♘d4 *(D)*

B



This is the only logical move.

19...♖xa3!?

This is a major decision-point for Black. While the rook exchange appears to be Black's safest option at this juncture – in the sense that he will most probably not get mated now – there is a certain strategic risk involved as he will end up with a weak pawn on d3 and needs to compensate for this with dynamic play.

The main alternative, 19...♕b6, is examined in Line 2A.

19...♘e5?! was Kamsky's choice in the aforementioned match, but is slightly under a cloud these days: 20 ♖xa8! ♕xa8 (20...♗xa8 21 ♘xb5 ♕b6 22 ♘a3 ±) 21 ♘xb5 ♖c8 (another instructive example is 21...♕a1 22 ♘a3 ♗a6 23 ♘c2 ♘xc2 24 ♗xc2 ♖c8 25 ♘b1 g6 26 ♗d2! ♕xb2

27 ♗c3 ♕b6 28 ♗d4 ♕a5 29 ♘c3 ± Topalov-Almasi, Monaco Amber rpd 2003) 22 ♘f3! ♘ed3 23 ♖f1 ♕a1 and now the strong and typical 24 ♗d2! ♕xb2 25 ♗c3! activating the bishop on the long diagonal and firmly blockading the c-pawn for the small price of a pawn. Compare the Topalov game above. Shirov-Lekić, Bosnian Cht (Neum) 2002 continued 25...♕b3 26 ♕d2 ♕a4 27 ♘fd4 ±. Black's activity has petered out and White's positional trumps will prevail.

20 bxa3 ♘d3

This is in reality a pawn sacrifice, intended to gain the bishop-pair and some piece activity.

21 ♗xd3

This is the only move to have been tested in practice, and we examine its consequences at length in Line 2A. 21 ♖e3 ♕b6 22 ♘2f3 ♘7c5 must be at least equal for Black.

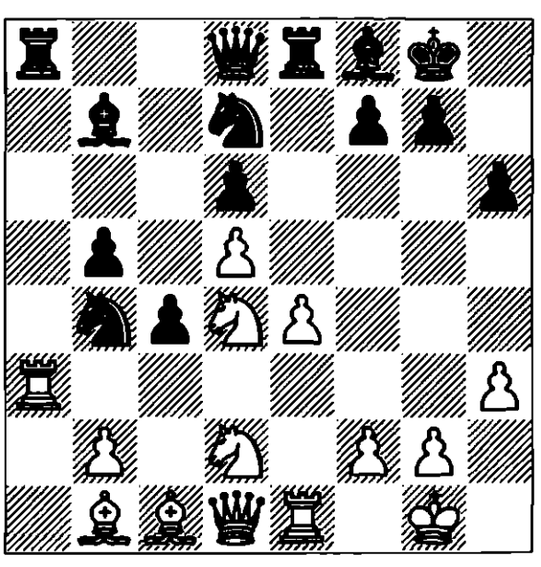
Chapter Guide

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 h6 13 ♗c2 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 ♘d7 17 ♖a3 c4
Line 2A: 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♘d4 83
Line 2B: (18 ♘d4) 87

2A: 17...c4 Main Line

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 h6 13 ♗c2 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 ♘d7 17 ♖a3 c4)

18 axb5 axb5 19 ♘d4 *(D)*



19...♖xa3

We give this move as our main line because it is relatively solid. The alternative 19...♕b6 20 ♘f5 ♘e5 21 ♖g3 leads to positions where Black is living on a knife-edge:

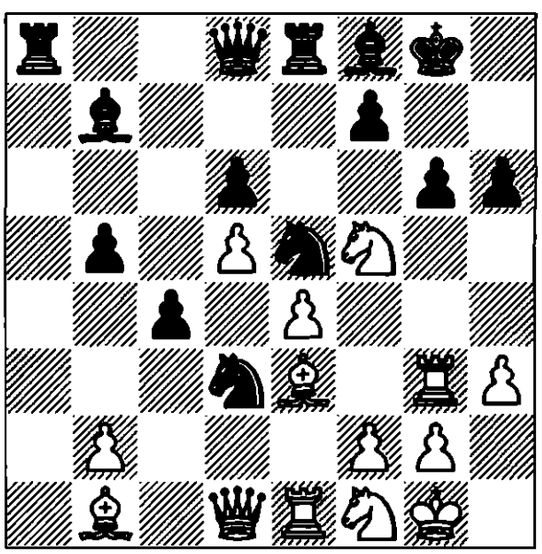
a) Black should avoid 21...♔h7?, when, judging by current practice, White has realistic hopes of winning a brilliancy prize: 22 ♘f3 ♘bd3 23 ♗e3 and now just two examples:

a1) 23...♕a5 24 ♗xd3 ♘xd3 25 ♗xh6! gxh6 26 ♘g5+! ♔g6 27 ♕h5+!! 1-0 Marcinkiewicz-Zundel, corr. 2002 (27...♔xh5 28 ♘h7! ♕xe1+ 29 ♔h2 +–).

a2) 23...♕c7 24 ♗xd3 ♘xd3 25 ♗xh6! g6 (25...gxh6 26 ♘g5+) 26 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 27 ♕d2 1-0 Kotronias-Fox, Cork 2005.

b) However, after 21...g6 the ball at the moment appears to be in White's court:

b1) 22 ♘f1 ♘bd3 23 ♗e3 ♕d8 *(D)* and then:



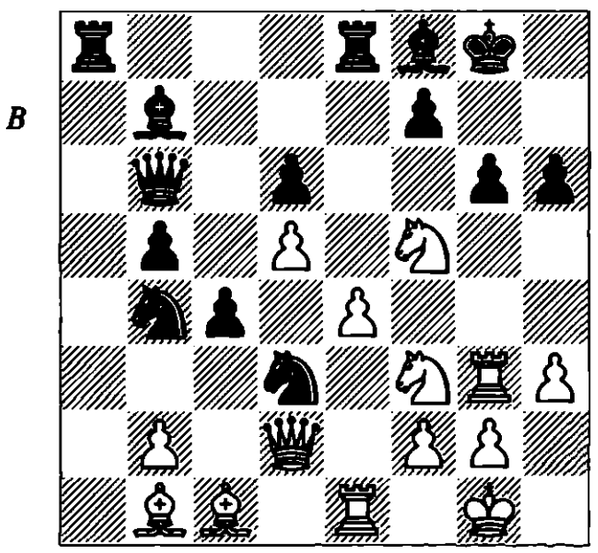
b11) 24 ♖e2 ♖a1 25 ♗d4 ♔h7 26 b3 ♖xb1 27 ♕xb1 ♘f4 28 ♖e1 gxf5 and Black had parried the threats in Wang Zili-Yang Wuming, Chinese Cht 1987 and was ready to capitalize on his material advantage.

b12) In a recent GM encounter White tried 24 f4!? but this didn't bring the desired result either: 24...♘xb2! 25 ♕d2 ♘ed3 26 ♗d4 and here:

b121) 26...♕a5!? 27 ♗c3 (Vescovi-L'Ami, Wijk aan Zee 2006) 27...b4! 28 ♗xb2 ♘xe1 29 ♕xe1 c3 30 ♗c1 ♕xd5! and White's initiative peters out.

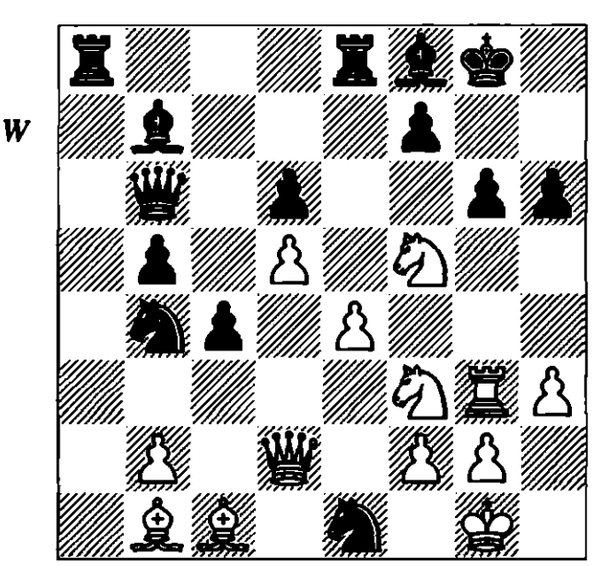
b122) 26...♘xe1!? is very possible, since White has problems lining up his pieces as desired along the a1-h8 diagonal; e.g., 27 ♗xb2 ♕a5! and Black wins after 28 ♕d4 ♕a7! as well as after 28 ♗c3 b4.

b2) 22 ♘f3 ♘ed3 23 ♕d2!!? *(D)* (theory considers 23 ♗e3 ♕d8 fine for Black) is a devastating surprise, originally prepared by the Anand team (Yusupov and Ubilava) 10 years earlier, for a match versus Kamsky. White is directing all his pieces towards Black's king. However, a sober analysis shows that the sacrifice is only sufficient for a draw:



b21) Adams, understandably demoralized, replied 23...♗xd5? 24 ♘xh6+ ♗xh6 25 ♕xh6 ♕xf2+ 26 ♔h2 ♘xe1 27 ♘h4! ♘ed3 28 ♘xg6! and White's attack was winning: 28...♕xg3+ 29 ♔xg3 fxg6 30 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 31 ♕f6+ ♔g8 32 ♗h6 1-0 Anand-Adams, San Luis FIDE Wch 2005.

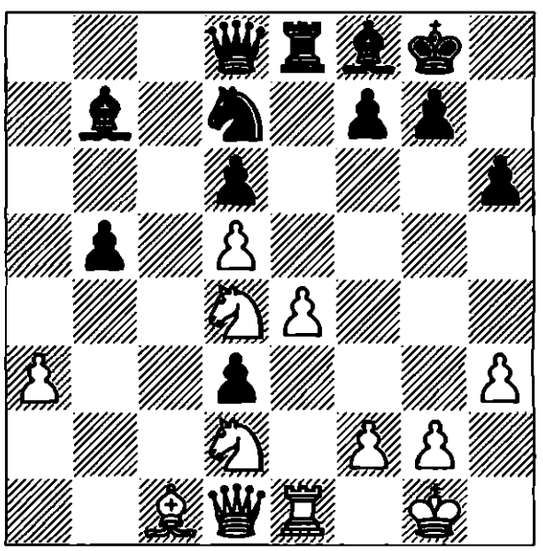
b22) Stohl analyses 23...♘xe1! *(D)*:



b221) 24 ♘3h4 ♘bd3 25 ♗xd3 ♘xd3 26 ♘xh6+ ♗xh6 27 ♕xh6 ♕xf2+ 28 ♔h2 ♘xc1 29 ♘f5!? (29 ♘xg6 ♕xg3+ 30 ♔xg3 fxg6 =) 29...♕xg3+ 30 ♔xg3 gxf5 31 exf5 ♘e2+ 32 ♔h2 ♘d4 33 f6 ♘f5 34 ♕g5+ ♔h7 35 ♕xf5+ ♔h6 36 ♕d7 ♗xd5 37 ♕xd6 ♔g6 38 ♕xd5 ♔xf6 =.

b222) 24 ♘xe1 ♖a1 25 ♘xh6+ ♗xh6 26 ♕xh6 ♘xd5! 27 e5 (27 ♖xg6+ fxg6 28 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 29 ♕f5+ is an immediate draw) 27...♖xb1 (in *New In Chess* 8/2005, P.H.Nielsen, Anand's second in San Luis, analysed 27...♖e6 instead, but came to the same conclusion as Stohl: draw) 28 ♖xg6+ fxg6 29 ♕xg6+ with a draw by perpetual check.

20 bxa3 ♘d3 21 ♗xd3 cxd3 *(D)*



This is what it's all about. Will Black be able to generate sufficient counterplay while White picks up the stranded pawn?

22 ♖e3

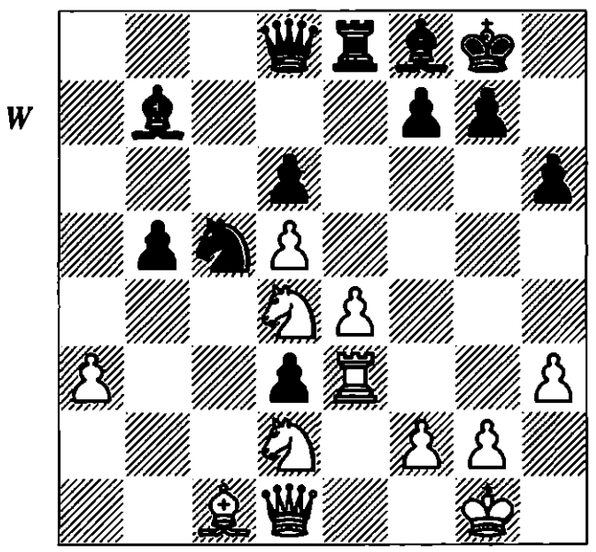
This is White's current preference – immediately putting the question to the d3-pawn.

22 ♗b2 seems less accurate: 22...♕a5 23 ♘f5 g6!? (23...♘e5?! 24 ♗xe5! dxe5 25 ♘b3 ± Kasparov-Karpov, London/Leningrad Wch (14) 1986) 24 ♘b3 (24 ♘e3 ♘e5 25 ♘g4 ♘xg4 26 hxg4 b4 27 ♘b3 ♕a4 = Stefansson-Gligorić, Reykjavik 1995) 24...♕a4 25 ♕xd3 ♘e5! 26 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 27 f4 ♖e8 28 ♘g3 and now *NCO* concludes that the position is unclear. Stohl adds 28...♗g7, when Black has compensation in the form of the bishop-pair.

22...♘c5!? *(D)*

It appears that for some time 22...♘e5 has been considered the main line, but although after 23 ♘4f3 f5!? 24 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 25 ♗b2 ♖e7! 26 exf5 ♖xe3 27 fxe3 ♗xd5 Black's position superficially does not look so grim, his pawn-structure is still compromised and the bishops have little scope. Theory considers White to have a small edge, and that Black must fight for

a draw. We are reluctant to recommend this prospectless scenario to ambitious players; e.g., 28 ♕g4! ♕c8 29 ♕d4 ♗c4 30 ♘xc4 bxc4 (30...♕xc4? is worse, as after 31 ♕xc4+ bxc4 32 ♗c3 White's outside passed pawn should be decisive) 31 f6 ± Glek-Kharlamov, corr. 1988. Black's connected passed pawns are surprisingly harmless and White combines an attack on the king with advancing the a-pawn, creating a model game on the theme 'play versus two weaknesses'.



23 ♗b2 ♗c8

23...♕a5 has been played by Gligorić among others, but Black needs an improvement over 24 ♕c1 ♕a4 25 ♕c3 ♖c8 26 ♕b4 ♕d1+ 27 ♘f1 ♗e7?! 28 ♘f5 ± Rittner-del Vasto, corr. 1995.

24 ♘c6

After 24 ♘xb5 ♕a5 (24...♕b6 25 a4 doesn't get Black anywhere, but 24...f5!? is an interesting option, with the point that 25 exf5? is met by 25...♖xe3 26 fxe3 and now 26...♕b6! is very strong because 27 a4 fails to 27...♘xa4! and e3 hangs) 25 ♘d4 ♗d7 Black has compensation.

It should be noted that Beliavsky gave White a clear advantage after the text-move in *Informator*. However, he doesn't give a single variation leading to White's advantage until move 33 (see note to White's 33rd below) and we don't agree with his evaluation of the resulting endgame.

24...♕h4!?

This may be the move that resurrects the 17...c4 line. In Wedberg's words: "When Black loses in this line it's usually because of dropping the d3-pawn for nothing, or more commonly because White gets a kingside attack, so keeping the queen on the kingside might be a good defensive measure as well."

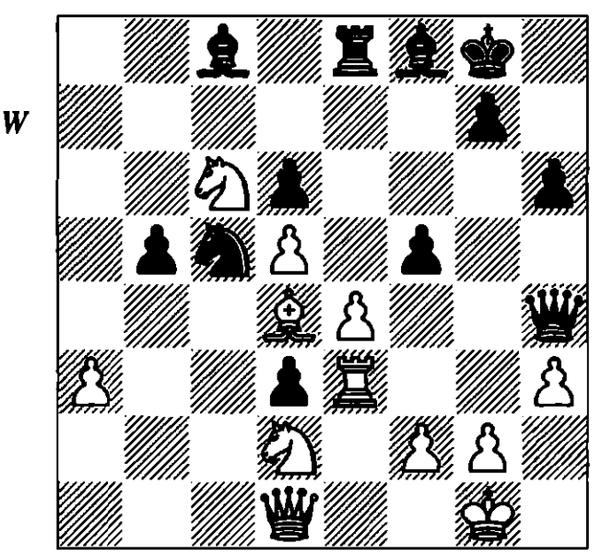
Conclusion:

17...c4 unbalances the position in a very different way from 17...f5. Black tends to drop a pawn in return for active piece-play which, in practice, may be a more comfortable approach. We have to admit that we don't completely trust that Black's activity compensates for his structural flaws after 22...♘c5, but the lines are messy and so far no one has pointed out a convincing route to an advantage for White.

Illustrative Game 6

Anand – Beliavsky
Madrid 1998

25 ♗d4 f5! *(D)*



In positions like this, with an unruly pawn-structure, piece activity is all-important.

26 ♘f3

a) We are not fond of the conclusion 'unclear' but are unable to come up with another evaluation of the position after 26 ♗xc5!? dxc5 27 e5 c4.

b) Activating Black's bishop with 26 exf5 doesn't look right; e.g., 26...♖xe3 27 ♗xe3 ♗xf5 and this position already looks rather good for Black. A plausible line is 28 ♕b1 ♕a4 29 ♘d4 ♗d7 30 ♘c6!? and now Black can choose 30...♗f5 with a repetition if he so wishes.

26...♕h5 27 e5 f4 28 ♖e1 dxe5 29 ♘cxe5 ♕f5 30 ♘h4

If nothing else, this demonstrates that White has a draw in his pocket.

a) After 30 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 31 ♘xd3 (31 ♕xd3 is even worse as the a3-pawn will drop off after all the exchanges) 31...♖xe1+ 32 ♘fxe1 ♗d6 33 ♕b3 ♗d7 the bishop-pair provides Black with full compensation for the pawn deficit.

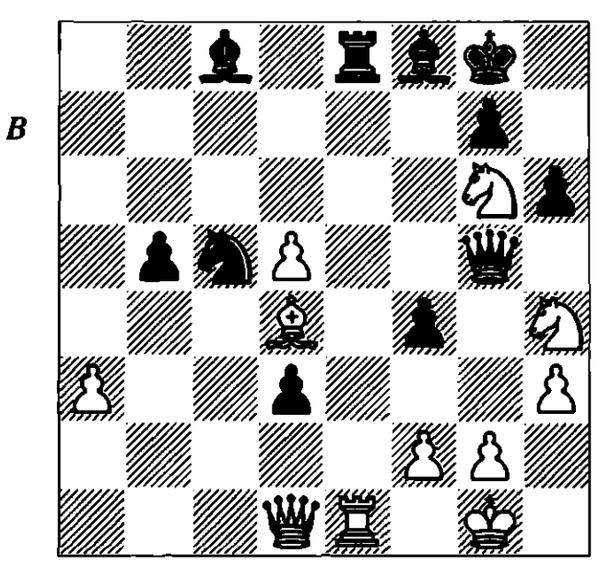
b) The knight-pair was doing a much better job in the ending resulting from 30 ♕b1 ♗a6 (we must admit we don't see the problem with 30...♘d7!?, when White's only critical continuation seems to be 31 ♕xb5 d2! 32 ♘xd2 ♖xe5 33 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 34 ♕e8 ♘f7 and we believe Black is more than fine, the minor pieces outweighing the rook) 31 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 32 ♘h4 ♕f6 33 ♘xd3 ♖xe1+ 34 ♕xe1 ♗xa3 35 ♕e8+ ♗f8 36 d6 ♕xd6 37 ♘g6 ♗b7 38 ♘de5 ♗d5 39 ♕xb5 in Maros-Marek, corr. 2002. With all the pawns on the same wing, White had slightly the better chances, but Black had no problems holding the draw.

30...♕g5 31 ♘eg6 *(D)*

This is an attempt to go for the black king, but at the cost of upgrading Black's d3-pawn from a weakness to a dangerous passed pawn. The alternatives also fail to impress:

a) 31 ♘hf3 repeats after 31...♕f5. That isn't much of a theoretical success for White, but may still be annoying for an ambitious player with the black pieces.

b) 31 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 32 ♘xd3 ♖xe1+ 33 ♕xe1 ♗f8 34 ♕e8 ♕xd5 35 ♘g6 (35 ♘xf4 ♕d1+ 36 ♔h2 ♕d7 ∓) 35...♕f7 36 ♕xf8+ ♕xf8 37 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 38 ♘xf4 ♔e7 and in Tait-de Almeida, corr. 2000 it seemed that Black's better king position and the advantage of bishop versus knight compensated for the pawn deficit.


B

31...♖xe1+ 32 ♕xe1 ♕xd5 33 ♘xf8

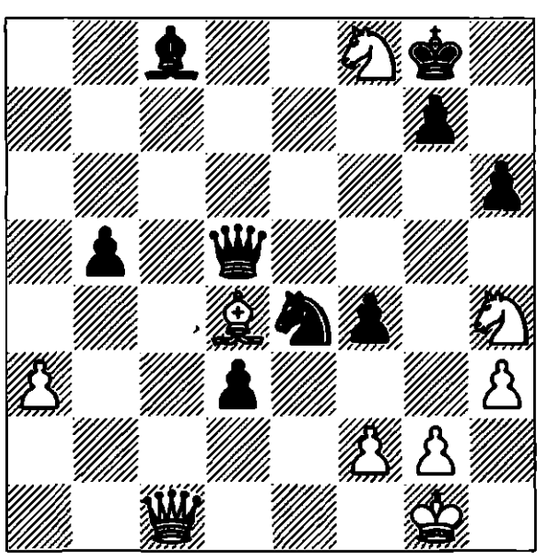
The position after 33 ♕e8 ♕f7 34 ♕xc8 d2 35 ♗xc5 (35 ♕g4? f3 –+) 35...d1♕+ 36 ♔h2 ♕dd7 37 ♕xf8+ ♕xf8 38 ♗xf8 ♕d4 39 f3 was evaluated as ± by Beliavsky in *Informator 72*, but after the plausible continuation 39...♕f2 40 ♗b4 ♔h7 we cannot agree with this. It looks like a positional draw where neither player can make any progress at all.

33...♘e4!?

We don't think Beliavsky was playing for a win with this move, but actually it leads to a fascinating finish. Anyway, at this point two correspondence games have ended with a draw by repetition after 33...♔xf8 34 ♘g6+ ♔f7 35 ♘h8+ (Lelenko-Marek, corr. 2000 and Eiben-Marek, corr. 2001) as Black escapes after 35 ♕e7+? ♔xg6 36 ♕xg7+ ♔h5 (but not 36...♔f5?? 37 ♕f6+ ♔e4 38 f3#); e.g., 37 ♗e3!? (with the idea of removing the black f-pawn so he can go g4+ on the next move) 37...♗xh3! 38 ♗xf4 ♕xg2+ 39 ♕xg2 ♗xg2 40 ♔xg2 with a winning endgame for Black.

34 ♕c1? *(D)*

This is the right idea but inaccurately executed. 34 ♘f3 ♔xf8 35 ♕c1 maintains equality.


B

34...d2?

Beliavsky points out that now Black could have won with 34...♕c4! 35 ♕xf4 d2 36 ♘fg6 d1♕+ 37 ♔h2 ♘f6.

35 ♕xc8 d1♕+ 36 ♔h2 ♘d6 37 ♕d8 ♕f7 38 ♕xd6

After Beliavsky's 38 ♘e6+? ♘e8 39 ♘xg7, 39...♕e1! looks like the right move since after 40 ♘hf5 ♔h7 41 ♕b6 ♕g6 42 ♕a7 ♘xg7 43

♘xg7 Black has a neat mate by 43...♕g3+! 44 fxg3 fxg3#.

38...♕xf8 39 ♕d5+ ♕f7 40 ♕a8+ ♔h7 41 ♕e4+ ♔g8

41...g6? 42 ♕e5 ♕f8 43 ♘xg6! +–.

½-½

Comments based on Anand's for *ChessBase Magazine* and Beliavsky's in *Informator 72*.

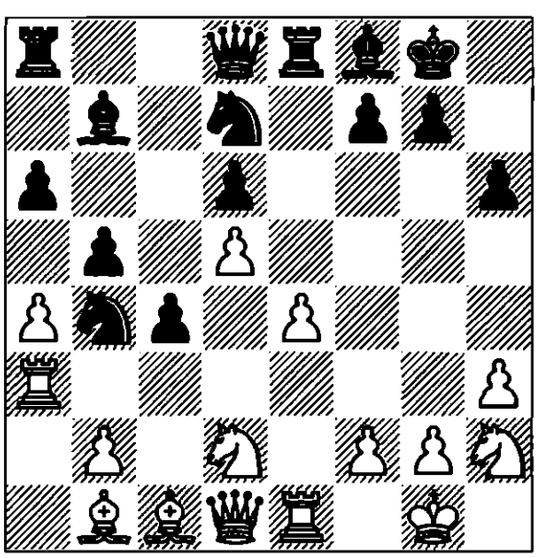
2B: 17...c4 18 ♘d4 and Rare 18th Moves

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 h6 13 ♗c2 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 ♘d7 17 ♖a3 c4)

18 ♘d4

White immediately occupies the juicy central square that was offered him by Black's last move. This is what everybody would play, if it weren't for a small tactical finesse.

18 ♘h2?! *(D)* looks a little illogical now that the d4-square is available, but it shouldn't be underestimated as it's the start of quite a dangerous attacking scheme:



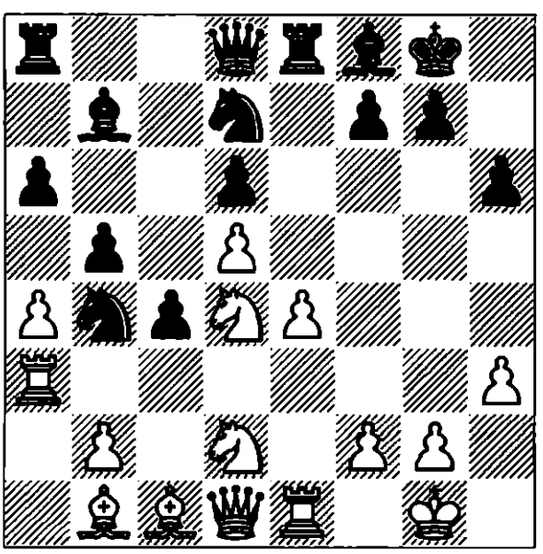
a) 18...♘d3!? is an idea we shall encounter in many versions in this line. After 19 ♗xd3 b4 20 ♘xc4 bxa3 play is reminiscent of the lines arising from the better-explored *18 ♘d4 ♕f6 19 ♘2f3 ♘d3*, but this seems to be an improved version for Black: 21 b4 a2 22 ♗b2 ♘e5 23 ♘a5 ♕b6 24 ♕d2 (24 ♘xb7 ♘xd3 25 ♕xd3 ♕xb4 26 ♗c3 ♕xb7 ∓) 24...♘xd3 25 ♕xd3 ♖ac8 26 ♕d2 and now there was a sudden finish in M.Anderton-Sashikiran, British Ch (Hove) 1997: 26...♗xd5! 27 exd5 ♖c2 0-1.

b) Black can also prepare the knight intrusion with 18...♘e5, despite the fact that White can then swing the rook over to the kingside: 19 ♖g3 ♘ed3, and now:

b1) 20 ♖f1 g6 followed by ...♗g7 was very comfortable for Black in Perez-Vasquez, Ciego de Avila 1997.

b2) 20 ♘g4 g6 21 ♘f3 is aggressive but probably not quite sufficient: 21...♘xe1 22 ♕xe1 ♘xd5 23 ♕d2 ♘f6 24 ♘xh6+ ♗xh6 25 ♕xh6 ♗xe4 26 ♗xe4 ♘xe4?! (after 26...♖xe4! we cannot even find a draw for White) 27 ♖xg6+ fxg6 28 ♕xg6+ ♔f8? (28...♔h8 forces a perpetual) 29 ♘d4! ♕d7 30 ♘f5 1-0 Kaiumov-El Taher, Doha tt 2002.

We now return to 18 ♘d4 *(D)*:



18...♕f6!

Clearly the best move, introducing the tactical finesse referred to above. Black practically forces White to play the slightly clumsy ♘2f3, which prevents his rook from being transferred to the kingside and blocks his f-pawn, which could have been used to force through the thematic e5 break.

Other moves are worse:

a) 18...♘e5? is met by 19 axb5 ♕b6 and now the stunning piece sacrifice 20 ♘xc4! ♘xc4 21 ♖g3, first played in Sax-Short, Subotica IZ 1987. White has a very dangerous, and maybe already decisive, attack.

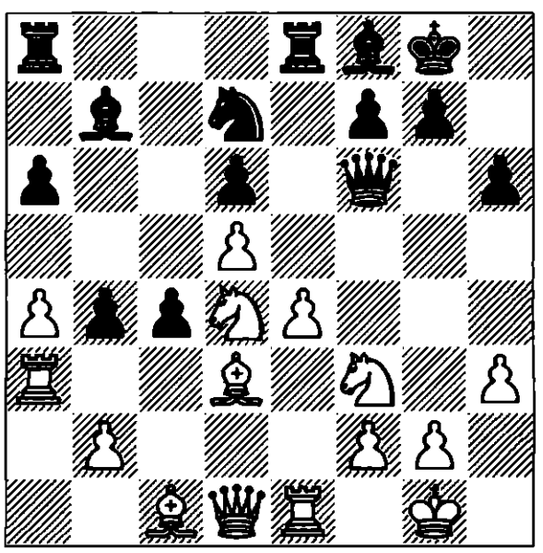
b) 18...♘d3?! 19 ♗xd3 b4 20 ♗xc4 bxa3 21 bxa3 ♘c5 22 ♗b2 g6 23 ♘c6 ♕b6 24 ♕c2 ♗g7 25 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 26 ♕c3+ ♔g8 27 ♕f6 ♕c7 28 e5 +– Shirov-Z.Almasi, Dresden rpd 1997.

19 ♘2f3 ♘c5

Black has a major alternative in 19...♘d3!?, which has a good reputation theoretically.

Actually we are not convinced it is that good for Black but a study of the complications is essential for understanding this line, as it is the reason why 18 axb5 has become White's most popular choice. After 20 ♗xd3 (we don't think 20 ♖xd3?! cxd3 21 axb5 axb5 22 ♘xb5 ♖a1 23 ♗xd3 of Pupo-R.Leyva, Cuba 1997 is a fully sound exchange sacrifice; after 23...♖c8 the black rooks have a lot of scope and we believe Black is slightly better) 20...b4 *(D)* White must either accept that Black has fully equal chances or demonstrate some courage by sacrificing the exchange:

W



a) 21 ♖a1 cxd3 is no problem for Black:

a1) 22 ♕xd3?! ♘c5 23 ♕c4 (or 23 ♕c2 ♗xd5!) 23...a5 24 ♘b5 ♖ac8 25 ♕d4 ♕xd4 26 ♘bxd4 ♘xe4 ∓.

a2) 22 ♘b3 ♕g6! 23 ♕xd3 ♘f6! 24 ♘h4 (24 ♘bd2 ♘xd5! 25 ♘h4 ♕h5 26 ♘df3 ♘f6 ∓) 24...♕h7! 25 ♗d2 ♗xd5 with the initiative.

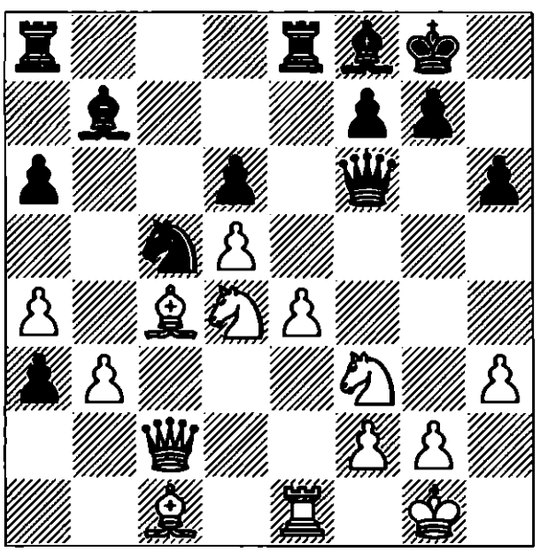
b) At the moment 21 ♖b3!? is state of the art and worth a closer look: 21...cxb3 22 ♘xb3 ♘e5 (probably better than 22...g6 23 ♗e3 ♗g7 24 ♘a5 ♖eb8 25 ♖e2 ♘e5 26 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 and now 27 ♘c4! ♕e7 28 ♘b6 ♖a7 29 a5 with a complete bind for White in Lahno-L'Ami, Wijk aan Zee 2006; the b4-pawn can be picked up at White's leisure) 23 ♗e2 ♘xf3+ 24 ♗xf3 ♗c8 25 ♘a5 ♗d7 26 ♘c4 ♖ac8 27 ♘b6 ♖c7 28 a5 when Black can choose between safety and complications:

b1) 28...♗b5 is a safe option; e.g., 29 ♕b3 g6 30 ♗d2 ♗g7 31 ♗xb4 ♖d8 32 ♗c3 ♖xc3 33 bxc3 ♕xc3, etc.

b2) In Enders-Lukacs, Budapest 1995, Black went for the riskier 28...♗xh3!? 29 gxh3 ♖xc1 30 ♕xc1 ♕xf3, but after 31 ♕e3 ♕f6 32 ♘c4 ♕h4 33 ♕f3 g6 34 ♖e3 h5 35 b3 ♕d8 36 ♕f4 ♕c7 37 ♔g2 ♖d8 38 ♖e2 ♗g7 the position was more unbalanced but still equal.

c) The allegedly most critical line is 21 ♗xc4 bxa3 22 b3 (22 b4?! ♘e5! 23 ♗b3 ♘xf3+ 24 ♘xf3 ♕a1! is slightly better for Black) 22...♘c5 23 ♕c2 *(D)*, when it's Black's turn to make his choice:

B



c1) 23...a2!? has been the preference in correspondence games and is an intriguing option. The pawn is doomed but it will certainly try to create some confusion in White's camp before its inevitable demise. 24 ♗b2 ♕g6 25 ♘h4 ♕h7 and here:

c11) 26 ♘hf5 ♗c8! 27 ♘g3 ♗d7 = (not 27...f5? 28 ♘e6! ±).

c12) 26 f3 ♖ac8 and now:

c121) 27 b4 ♘d7 merely creates weaknesses for White on the c-file and cannot be recommended. Schuster-Kreuzer, corr. 1986 continued 28 ♘c6 g5! 29 ♘f5 ♕xf5 30 exf5 ♖xe1+ 31 ♔f2 a1♕ 32 ♗xa1 ♖xa1 −+.

c122) 27 ♖a1! g6 28 ♖xa2 ♗g7 29 ♘e2! ♕h8 (now that's an exotic queen location for a Ruy!) 30 ♗xg7 ♕xg7 31 ♕d2 ♔h7 32 g3 ♕f6 and in Antonov-Kreuzer, corr. 1986-9 the players agreed a draw as it was as hard to imagine a way for Black to activate his rooks, as it was for White to break through without opening lines for the rooks.

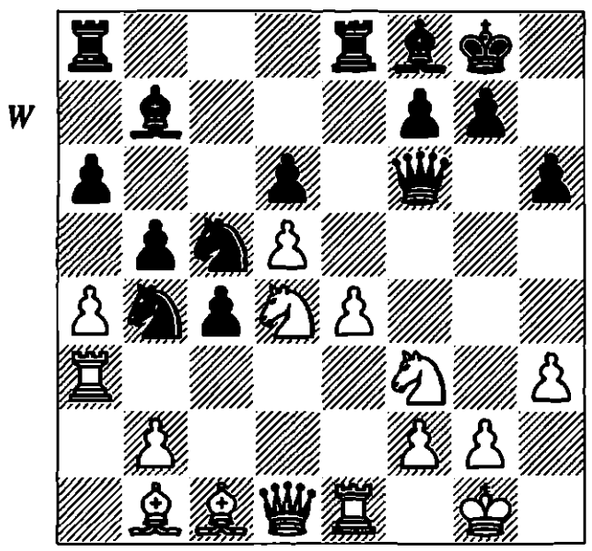
c2) 23...♕g6 and now:

c21) *Fritz 6-Rebel Century 10*, Ramat Aviv 2000 continued 24 ♗xa3 ♖xe4 25 ♖f1, when we would have liked to see 25...♖ae8!?, which seems to give Black comfortable equality after,

for instance, 26 b4 ♘d7 27 ♗d3 ♗xd5 28 ♘d2 ♕f6 29 ♘xe4 ♕xd4.

c22) 24 ♘h4 ♕f6 25 ♘hf3 ♕g6 26 ♘h4 ♕f6 ½-½ Anand-Kamsky, Las Palmas PCA Ct (5) 1995.

We now return to 19...♘c5 *(D)*:



20 axb5

White cannot prevent Black from establishing a very annoying knight at d3, so he may as well accept the offered pawn.

20 ♖ae3 ♘bd3 21 ♗xd3 ♘xd3 22 ♖xd3 is among the less convincing versions of White's exchange sacrifice. After 22...cxd3 23 ♕xd3 bxa4 24 ♗d2 ♗c8 25 ♗c3 ♕g6 White did not have enough compensation in Timofeev-Yakovenko, Oropesa del Mar U-18 Wch 2001.

20...axb5 21 ♘xb5

Kasparov gives 21 ♖xa8? ♖xa8 22 ♘xb5 ♖a1 23 ♘c3 ♘bd3 24 ♖f1 and now 24...♘b3 ∓. The computer's 24...♖xb1 25 ♘xb1 ♘xe4 followed by ...♗xd5 might actually be easier though, picking up a lot of pawns for the exchange.

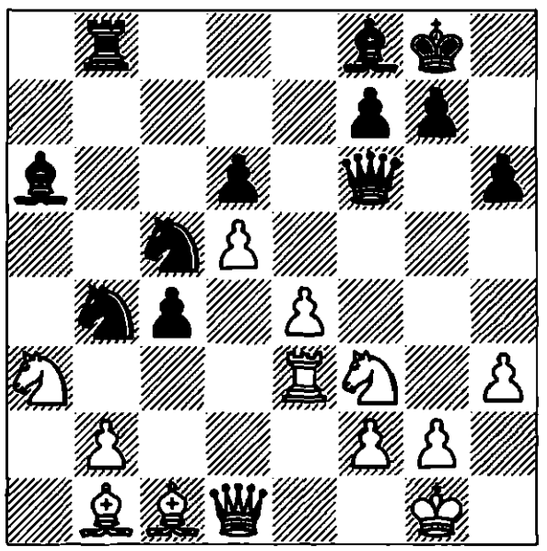
21...♖xa3 22 ♘xa3 ♗a6

Black should avoid 22...♘bd3 23 ♗xd3 ♘xd3 24 ♖e3!, when White already has a large advantage according to *NCO*. One of White's plans is ♗d2-c3 (even sacrificing the b2-pawn in the process), possibly followed by ♘d4-f5.

23 ♖e3 ♖b8! *(D)*

This strong move was introduced by Karpov. Black is now about to land a knight on d3, after which almost all of his pieces will display an enormous activity with the b2-pawn as an obvious target. To sum up, Black has enough compensation.

24 e5



Kasparov originally gave this natural pawn-break an exclamation mark, but today it has been analysed to a draw. However, other moves don't appear to offer White any more:

a) 24 ♖c3 ♘bd3 25 ♗xd3 (25 ♘xc4? ♕xc3 26 bxc3 ♖xb1 −+ Pavlović-Cela, Ilioupolis 1995) 25...cxd3 26 ♗e3 ♘xe4 27 ♖c6 ♖a8 and after the tactical sequence 28 ♕a4 d2 29 ♘xd2 ♘xd2 30 ♖xa6 ♖xa6 31 ♕xa6 ♕xb2 32 ♗xd2 ♕xd2 (Anand-Timoshchenko, Frunze 1987) Black actually has a slight edge, as White's pawn on d5 is too far advanced and is an obvious weakness. In addition, f2 might be vulnerable after ...h5, ...g6 and ...♗g7-d4. In the game, a young Anand didn't manage to defend this endgame and lost.

b) 24 ♘h2 ♘cd3 25 ♘g4 ♕d4 26 ♘c2 ♘xc2 27 ♗xc2 h5 28 ♘h2 g6 29 ♘f3 ♕b6 30 ♗xd3 cxd3 31 ♖e1 and in Milos-Mecking, Buenos Aires 2001 a fairly standard scenario had been reached where Black's bishop-pair and advanced pawn on d3 provided him with sufficient compensation for the pawn deficit.

24...dxe5 25 ♘xe5 ♘cd3!

For quite concrete reasons it has to be this knight. 25...♘bd3? gives up control of the c2-square and is met by strong 26 ♕c2! which protects f2, attacks c4 and lines up the queen and bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal: 26...♖b4 27 ♘c6 ♖b7 28 ♖e8 ± *NCO*. Instead, after 26 ♘g4? ♕b6 27 ♖g3 g6!? 28 ♗xh6 ♕xb2 29 ♕f3 ♘d7 30 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 White's attack was not sufficient for an advantage in Kasparov-Karpov, London/Leningrad Wch (16) 1986.

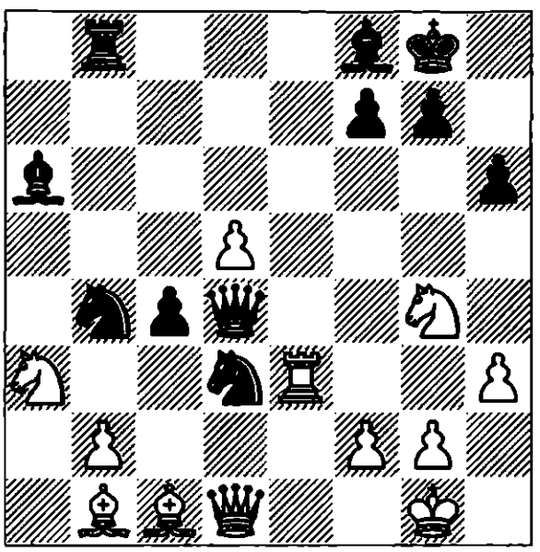
26 ♘g4

Or 26 ♗xd3 ♘xd3 27 ♖xd3 cxd3 28 ♘d7 ♕d6 29 ♘xb8 ♕xb8 =.

26...♕d4! *(D)*

Black should avoid 26...♕h4 27 ♖g3 ♔h8 28 ♗d2 ♗d6 29 ♖f3 ♘xb2 30 ♕e2 ♕e7 31 ♕xe7 ½-½ Nunn-Psakhis, Hastings 1987/8 as the final position is actually quite favourable for White.

W



27 ♘c2

27 ♖g3 ♔h8 doesn't seem to improve White's chances.

27...♘xc2 28 ♗xc2 ♗d6!

Not:

a) 28...♕xd5? 29 ♘f6+! gxf6 30 ♖g3+ +–.

b) 28...♗c5? 29 ♕f3 ± threatening both ♘xh6+ and ♖e4, Dvoirys-Timoshchenko, Barnaul 1988.

29 b3!

White has to undermine the strong d3-knight; otherwise he risks being worse.

Conclusion:

For the moment, both 19...♘d3 and 19...♘c5 work well for Black theoretically, which is the reason why interpolating 18 axb5 axb5 before putting the knight on d4 has become the established main line.

Illustrative Game 7

Dvoirys – Timoshchenko

USSR Cht (Naberezhnye Chelny) 1988

29...♕a1 30 bxc4 ♗xc4!

Not 30...♘xc1 31 ♖e1 ♗xc4 (31...♗a3? 32 ♕f3! intending ♘xh6+ or ♕f5 with a decisive attack) 32 ♕xc1 ♕xc1 33 ♖xc1 ±.

31 ♗xd3

31 ♖xd3? ♗xd3 32 ♗xd3 ♗a3 ∓.

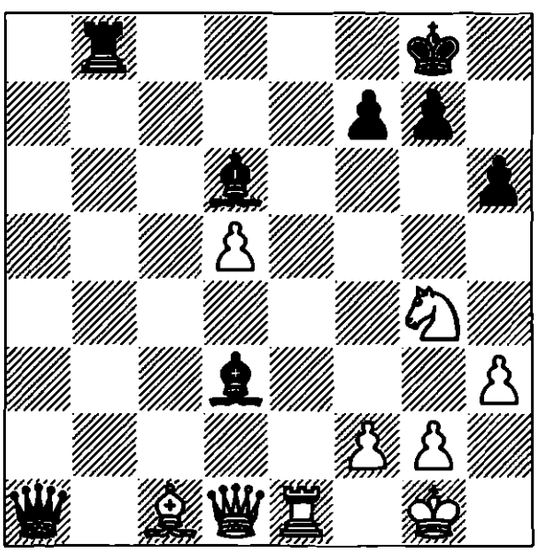
31...♗xd3 32 ♖e1 *(D)*

a) Or 32 ♖xd3 ♖b1 33 ♘f6+ gxf6 34 ♕g4+ with perpetual check.

b) A cute variation is 32 ♕xd3? ♕xc1+ 33 ♕f1 ♖b1 34 ♖e8+ ♔h7 35 ♘e3 ♕b2 36 ♘d1 ♕d2 37 ♖e1 ♗b4 38 ♔h2 g6! and Black wins.

c) 32 ♘xh6+ gxh6 33 ♖xd3 ♖b1 34 ♕g4+ also leads to a draw by perpetual check.

B



32...♗g6!

Black has enough compensation. The position is equal.

33 ♗d2

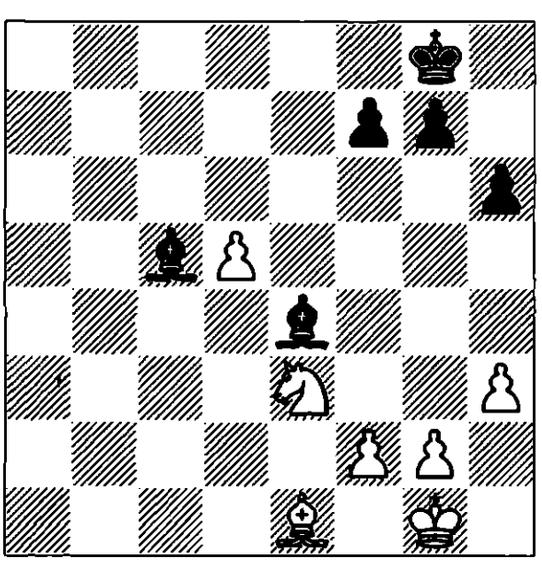
33 ♕e2 ♖b1 34 ♗d2 is just another way to the same position.

33...♖b1 34 ♕e2 ♖xe1+ 35 ♕xe1

35 ♗xe1? ♗b4 is obviously not an option for White (36 ♔f1 ♗d3 –+).

35...♕xe1+ 36 ♗xe1 ♗e4 37 ♘e3 ♗c5 *(D)*

W



This is about as drawn as an endgame can get.

½-½

3 Other Zaitsev Lines

Sincerity is the key. If you can fake that, you've got it made.
GEORGE BURNS

In this chapter we shall look at lines where White avoids the characteristic 12 a4 main lines of the Zaitsev. The lines considered in this chapter are generally calmer, and can hardly claim to refute the Zaitsev (although Line 3A is quite a good attempt to lure Black into Breyer territory). In a certain sense they are very comfortable for Black as he is allowed to complete his development without any difficulty. On the other hand, they demand Black to demonstrate his active plans.

Very roughly they can be divided into two main groups. Firstly there are the lines where White calmly prepares for the ♘f1-hop with quiet moves like a3 and ♗c2, while keeping the central tension. Secondly there are the lines where White heads for the same goal, but prepares it with the less subtle d5. This will invariably be met by ...c6, and after dxc6 we have a characteristic pawn-structure which you will meet in a lot of lines. There is not much to say about it on an abstract level except that piece control of d5 is essential.

Chapter Guide

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 (10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8)

Line 3A: 12 d5 91
Line 3B: 12 a3 95
Line 3C: (12 ♗c2) 100
Line 3D: (10 d4 ♖e8 11 a4!?) 104

3A: 12 d5

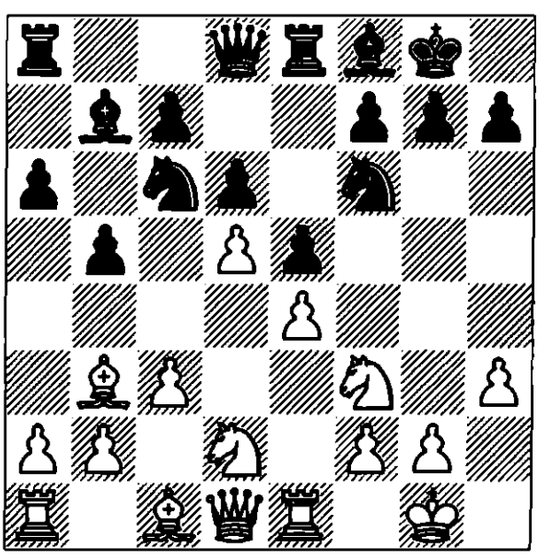
(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8)

12 d5 *(D)*

This is the line that Khalifman advocates for White in *Opening for White according to Anand volume 2*. That alone is reason enough to examine it thoroughly.

In contrast to Line 1G (where White had first played the active a4), this is normally an attempt to slow down the pace of the game in order to complete development. The quiet play allows both sides ample time to arrange their forces in preparation for a sharpening of the struggle. Play will in some ways be similar to the line mentioned above (12 a4 h6 13 d5) but an immediate transposition with 13 a4 is unlikely to occur, as Black will hardly reply 13...h6. However, even though Black is in less of a hurry to play ...h6 with the a2-g8 diagonal closed, he may still play it as preparation for ...c6 – not so much to protect f7 as to stop ♗g5, fighting for control over d5.

B



12...♘b8

For the sake of consistency we have made this knight move the main line, just as we did after 12 a4 h6 13 d5. Generally this Breyer redevelopment of the knight will lead to very harmonious play. From d7 the knight will back up its colleague on f6, and have access to some nice queenside squares.

Here too 12...♘e7 must be our alternative recommendation. 12...♘a7 is perhaps playable as well, but is even rarer than in the comparable position in Line 1G, and after 12...♘a5?! 13

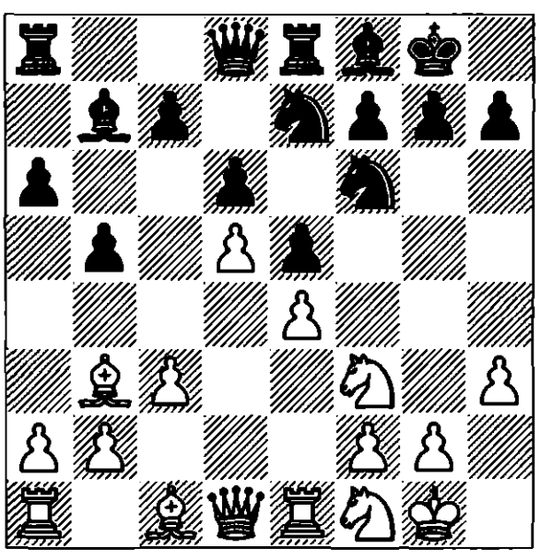
♗c2 c6 14 b4! ♘c4 15 ♘xc4 bxc4 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 ♗g5 Khalifman points out that White enjoys several significant positional pluses – the excellent d5 outpost and the pawn-majority on the queenside and that Black's position will lack strategic prospects if he fails to organize ...d5. This is nicely backed up with variations and we feel no urge to argue with him.

After 12...♘e7 White has:

a) 13 c4 c6 seems to work nicely for Black: 14 ♗c2 bxc4 15 dxc6 ♘xc6 16 ♘xc4 ♘d4! 17 ♘xd4 exd4 18 ♗g5 (18 ♕xd4 d5 19 ♘b6 dxe4 also leads to equality) 18...d5 19 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 20 e5 ♕h6 21 ♘d2 (21 ♘a5 ♗b4 22 ♘xb7 ♗xe1 23 ♕xe1 ♕c6 24 ♘d6 ♕xc2 25 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 = Topalov) 21...♗b4 22 ♖e2 ♗xd2 23 ♕xd2 ♕xd2 24 ♖xd2 ♖xe5 = Topalov-Piket, Amsterdam (9) 1996.

b) After 13 ♘f1 *(D)*, Khalifman makes a strong case for White:

B



b1) 13...h6?! is not satisfactory on account of 14 ♘3h2! c6 15 ♘g4! ♘xg4 16 hxg4 cxd5 17 exd5 ♘c8 18 ♘g3 ♘b6 19 ♘e4, when White had a very promising attacking position in Dolmatov-Ibragimov, Dortmund 1992, with g5 looming. It is a considerable success for White to preserve his pawn on d5. In addition he managed to secure the e4-square for his knight, mostly because of the g4-pawn, stopping an eventual ...f5 from Black. An instructive example that should serve as a warning to Black!

b2) 13...♘g6 is a better try. 14 a4 (the main line; 14 ♘3h2 is likely to transpose to line 'b21' after 14...h6 15 a4), and here:

b21) 14...h6 15 ♘3h2 and now:

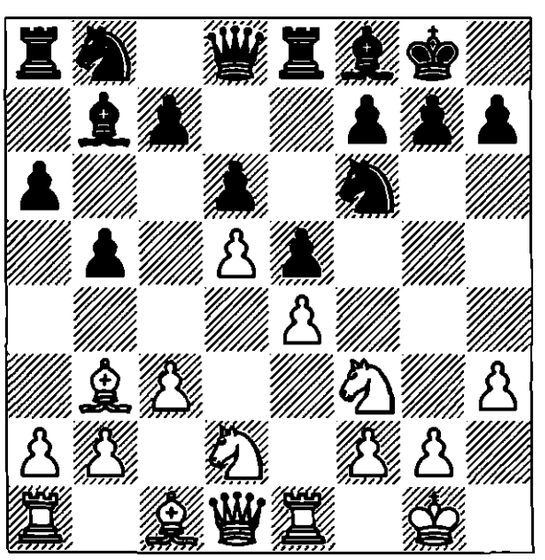
b211) 15...c6 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 ♘g4 bxa4 (not 17...♘xe4? 18 ♕f3 d5 19 ♖xe4 +–) 18 ♗xa4 ♗xa4 19 ♖xa4 ♘d7 20 ♖a1 ± Zso.Polgar-Brito, Las Palmas 1994. Black is still a long way from achieving his much-needed ...d5 break.

b212) After 15...♘d7 16 ♗c2, we don't like the 16...c5?! 17 b3 ♘f4 18 ♘f3 ♘b6 19 a5 ♘d7 20 ♔h2 of L.Dominguez-R.Leyva, Cuban Ch (Las Tunas) 2001. The bishop on b7 has practically no prospects at all (a successful ...f5 break is hard to organize) and generally Black lacks counterplay. His only pride – the knight on f4 – is about to be kicked away with g3. 16...c6 is better, as played in Brkić-Blagojević, Bosnjaci 2004, but the players agreed a premature draw here.

b22) 14...c6 15 dxc6 ♗xc6 16 ♗g5! h6 17 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 18 ♘e3! gives White a pleasant edge, Milos-Zaw Win Lay, Bali 2000. That game continued 18...♘f4 (18...♗xe4 is refuted by 19 ♘g4 ♕f4 20 ♖xe4 ♕xe4 21 ♗d5 ♕f5 22 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 23 axb5 ±) 19 ♘d5 ♗xd5 20 ♗xd5 ♖ab8 21 axb5 axb5 22 ♔h2 b4 23 c4, when Khalifman summed it up like this: "White's bishop on d5 is extremely active and White is dominant along the a-file. Black's only active piece – the knight on f4 – can be repelled with g3. Should Black decide to trade his knight for the white bishop, he might end up with a 'bad' bishop against a 'good' knight."

We now return to 12...♘b8 *(D)*:

W



13 ♘f1

In practice this is played almost exclusively, and indeed this was the main point of White's last move. The knight itself may as usual look

forward to a promising future on g3, but it is just as important that it opens the diagonal for the c1-bishop, which can now land on g5, fighting for control of the d5-square, which will become very significant after Black plays ...c6.

a) 13 c4!? c6 14 ♗c2 ♘bd7 (after 14...bxc4 15 dxc6 ♘xc6 16 ♘xc4 the black knight is slightly misplaced on c6) 15 b3 ♕c7 16 ♘f1 is a plausible transposition to the Breyer. For a discussion of these positions, we refer the reader to Line 3C.

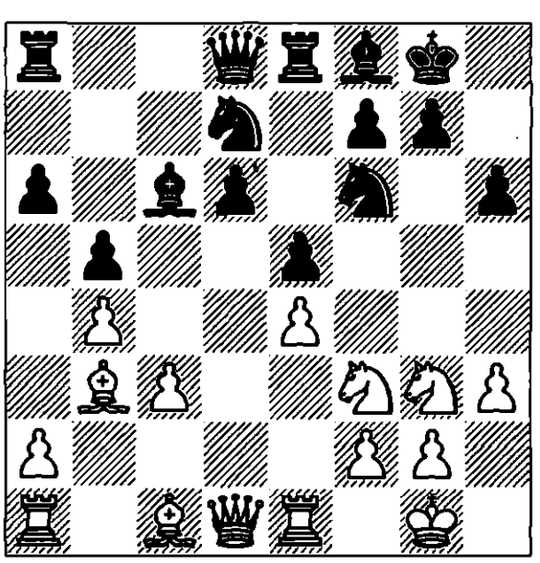
b) 13 a4 c6 (first inserting 13...♘bd7 appears very harmonious) 14 dxc6 ♘xc6 (the knight now experiences some discomfort on c6) 15 ♘g5 ♖e7 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 18 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 19 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 20 ♕b3+ ♔g6 21 ♕xb5 was very unbalanced but fairly equal in Jansa-Smejkal, Prague 1986, and a draw was agreed after 21...♘d8 22 ♕d3 ♘e6 23 b4 h6.

13...♘bd7 14 ♘3h2

We give Khalifman's recommendation as our main line. White prepares ♘g4, removing a defender of d5.

The natural 14 ♘g3 is a popular alternative. However, in our opinion, this mechanical move doesn't quite address the fundamental strategic requirements of the position, namely control of the d5-square. Black should reply 14...♘c5, kicking the b3-bishop away in preparation for ...c6. After 15 ♗c2 c6 16 b4 ♘cd7 17 dxc6 ♗xc6 we have the characteristic central pawn-formation on the board. In various modifications this will be a major theme in the next few chapters. We cannot stress too much the importance of d5 in such positions and much of the battle will revolve around that square. After 18 ♗b3 h6 *(D)* there is a split:

W



a) 19 ♘h2 a5 20 a3 ♘b6 21 ♘g4 ♗d7 22 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 =.

b) 19 ♕d3 ♕c7 20 ♘h4 ♘b6 21 ♘g6 d5 22 exd5 ♗xd5 23 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 24 ♘f5 ♕d7 25 ♗e3 ♘c4 26 ♗c5+ ♔g8 27 ♘e3 ♘xe3 28 ♕xe3 ♕e6 and Black was solid in Dolmatov-Ibragimov, Azov 1996. White's bishop-pair will soon be gone and the pawn-structure is rather in Black's favour. In the game White was the one who had to defend.

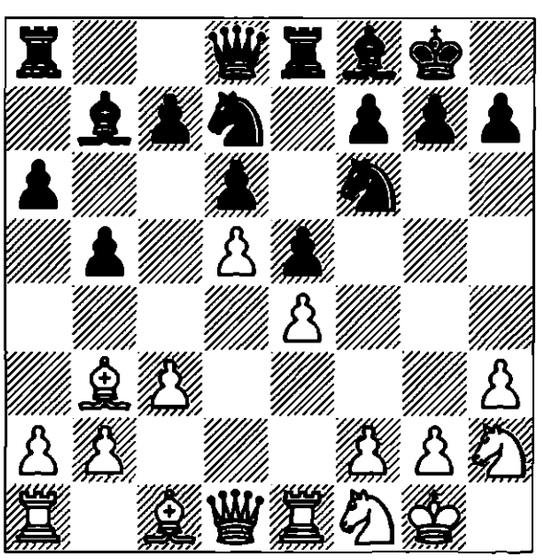
c) After 19 ♘h4 ♘b6 there is:

c1) 20 ♘hf5 ♘c4 21 ♘h5 ♘xh5 22 ♕xh5 g6 23 ♕g4 ♗d7 24 ♕g3 ♔h7 25 ♘e3 ♗e6 26 ♘xc4 bxc4 27 ♗c2 ♗g7 28 f4 f5 29 ♗d2 ♕f6 = Z.Almasi-Ibragimov, Vienna 1996.

c2) 20 ♘g6 ♘c4 21 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 22 a4 d5 23 ♕e2 ♔g8 24 axb5 axb5 25 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 26 ♖d1 ♘xe4 27 ♘xe4 dxe4 28 ♗xc4 bxc4 29 ♕xc4 e3 30 ♗xe3 ♗xg2 31 ♖d7 ♕f3 32 ♗f4 ♖e6 33 ♕d3 ♖g6 = Strautiņš-Gutsche, corr. 2001.

We now return to 14 ♘3h2 *(D)*:

B



14...♘c5 15 ♗c2 c6 16 b4

16 dxc6 ♗xc6 (= *NCO*) 17 ♗g5 h6 18 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 19 ♘g4 ♕g5 20 ♕f3 ♕f4 21 ♕xf4 exf4 22 ♘d2 ♖a7 23 ♘h2 ♖ae7 ∓ Nijboer-Karpov, Wijk aan Zee 1998.

16...♘cd7 17 dxc6 ♗xc6 18 ♗g5

This is the consistent course. White is methodically removing all Black's defenders of the critical d5-square. The alternative 18 ♘g4 ♘xg4 19 hxg4 ♘b6 has worked very well for Black in practice:

a) 20 ♕d3 g6 21 ♖d1 ♕c7 22 ♕f3 ♗d7! 23 ♗b3 ♗e6! (note this manoeuvre, which is a common and important resource for Black in these lines) 24 ♗g5 a5 25 ♘e3 ♗xb3 26 axb3

axb4 27 cxb4 ♖xa1 28 ♖xa1 d5! = Adams-Beliavsky, Leon Echt 2001.

b) 20 ♘e3 d5 21 exd5 ♘xd5 22 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 23 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 24 ♗b3 and here Emms gives 24...♖ad8! with instant equality as an improvement over 24...♗e6?! 25 ♗xe6 ♖xe6 26 a4! bxa4 27 ♖xa4, when White still had a nagging edge in Kasparov-Ivanchuk, Linares 1998.

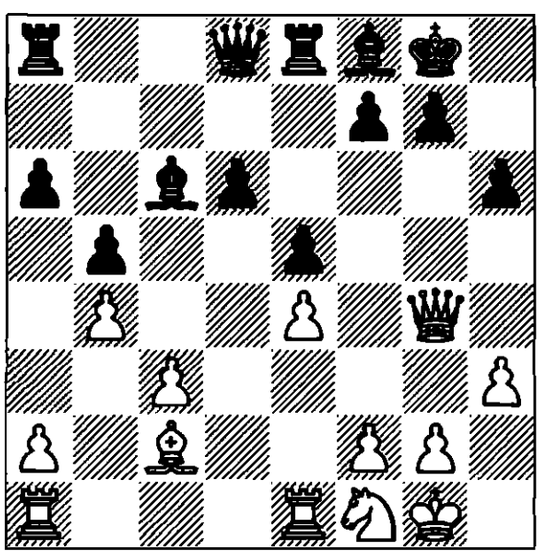
18...h6 19 ♗xf6

Alternatively 19 ♗h4 ♕c7 20 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 21 ♘g4 ♘xg4 22 hxg4 ♗e7 23 ♗b3 ♗g5 24 ♕f3 ♖f8 25 ♖ad1 and again 25...♗d7! gave Black equal chances in Z.Almasi-Beliavsky, Austrian Cht 2001/2. Compare with Bacrot's 21...♗d7 in the main line.

19...♘xf6 20 ♘g4 ♘xg4 21 ♕xg4 *(D)*

Flear gives 21 hxg4 d5! as fine for Black.

B



21...♗d7!

This move – which was introduced by Bacrot in high-level chess – has completely rehabilitated this line for Black and is not mentioned by Khalifman. The bishop is transferred to the e6-square to oppose a white bishop destined for b3, while at the same time evacuating the c-file for the rooks to exert pressure on White's backward c-pawn.

For the moment Black is in excellent shape theoretically in this line. The tempting 21...d5? has been proven premature as the white pieces explode into activity; e.g., 22 exd5 ♕xd5 23 ♗b3, when Black has found no completely satisfactory continuation:

a) 23...♕d7 24 ♕h5 a5 25 bxa5 ♕e7 26 ♘e3 ♖xa5 27 ♘g4 ♖d8 28 ♘xe5 1-0 McShane-Stefansson, Reykjavik 2003. White's threats against f7 can't be parried.

b) 23...♕d6 24 ♘e3 ♖ad8 25 ♖ad1 ♕c7 26 ♕h5 ♖xd1 27 ♖xd1 ♗b7 28 ♘f5 ± *Brutus-Sjeng*, Maastricht 2002. The bishop is strong on the a2-g8 diagonal.

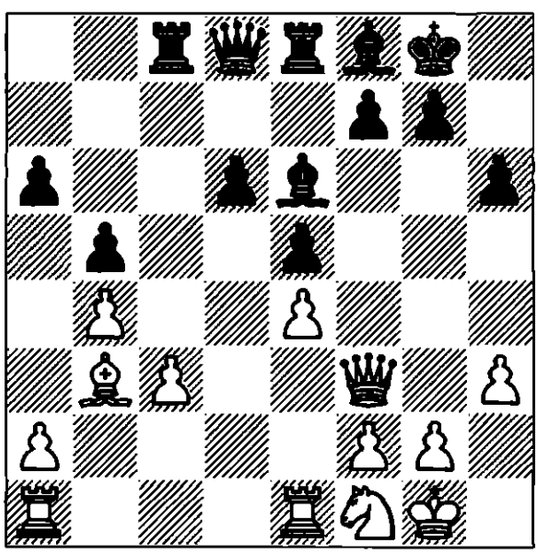
c) 23...♕d8 24 ♕h5 ♖a7 25 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 26 ♕xe5 ♕g5 27 ♕xg5 hxg5 28 ♘e3 ± Adams-Ponomariov, Linares 2002.

22 ♕f3

22 ♕d1 was White's choice in the stem game: 22...♖c8 23 ♖e3 ♗e6 24 ♗b3 ♖e7 25 ♖g3 ♖ec7 and Black was comfortable in Naiditsch-Bacrot, Lausanne 2003.

22...♖c8 23 ♗b3 ♗e6 *(D)*

W



24 ♗xe6

Somewhat surprisingly, this exchange was tried against Bacrot twice by very strong players. It appears premature as Black even has realistic hopes to achieve the ...d5 break later.

a) 24 ♖ec1 ♗e7!, planning ...♗g5, stops White's plan of taking control over d5 with ♘e3-d5. In Akopian-Zhang Zhong, Wijk aan Zee 2004, Black had enough counterplay after 25 ♖c2 a5 26 ♕d3 axb4 27 cxb4 ♖xc2 28 ♕xc2 ♕b6 with moves like ...♕d4, ...♖c8 and ...♗g5 on the agenda.

b) 24 ♕d3 ♕c7 25 ♖ec1 ♗e7 26 ♗c2 ♗g5 and Black was doing well in Van den Doel-L'Ami, Dutch Ch (Leeuwarden) 2005.

24...fxe6 25 a4 ♕d7

This is Bacrot's improvement over 25...♕c7, after which he experienced some minor problems against Leko in Dortmund 2005, but still managed to draw without too much effort.

26 axb5 axb5 27 ♕d3 ♕c6 28 ♖a3 d5!

If Black can safely play this move, it is a clear sign that White's strategy has failed.

Conclusion:
The onus is definitely on White to prove that he has something in this line, as at the time of writing Bacrot's 21...♗d7! renders the variation completely harmless.

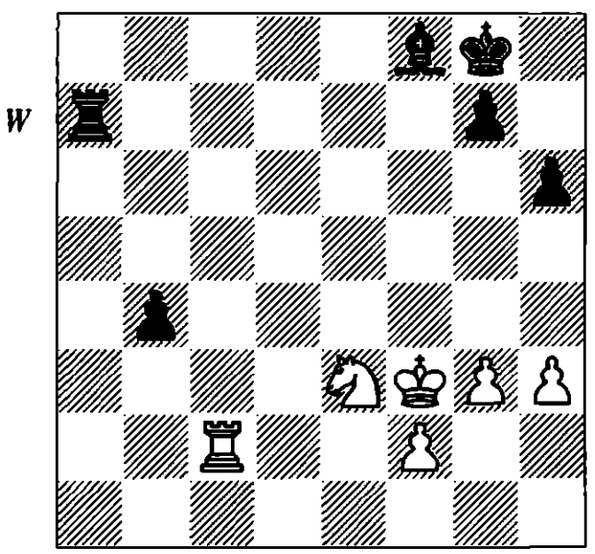
Illustrative Game 8

Külaots – Bacrot
Gothenburg Echt 2005

29 exd5 exd5 30 ♘e3 d4! 31 cxd4 exd4 32 ♕xd4 ♖e4 33 ♕a1 ♗xb4 34 ♖a6 ♕e8 35 ♖c1 ♖xc1+ 36 ♕xc1 ♗f8

The outside passed pawn on b5 protected by the bishop (after ...b4) secures Black a stable advantage.

37 ♖c6 ♖a4 38 g3 ♕a8 39 ♕c2 ♖a1+ 40 ♔h2 ♕a2 41 ♔g2 ♕xc2 42 ♖xc2 ♖a7 43 ♔f3 b4 *(D)*



Black's advantage is even clearer with the queens off the board, as the queen and knight can often form a lethal tandem, able to create some dangerous tactics. I (Leif) witnessed the game live; it was played with FIDE's official time-rate – i.e. 30 seconds increment after each move – which allows the combatants to go on 'for eternity'.

44 ♔e4 ♔f7 45 ♔d3 ♔e6 46 ♖c6+ ♔d7 47 ♖c2 ♖a1 48 ♔c4 g5 49 h4 gxh4 50 gxh4 ♖h1 51 ♖d2+ ♔c6 52 ♘f5 ♖h3 53 ♖d3 ♖xd3 54 ♔xd3 ♔b5 55 h5 ♔a4 56 ♔c2 ♔a3 57 ♔b1 ♔b3 58 ♘e3 ♔c3 59 ♘g4 ♗g7 60 ♘e3 ♔d3 61 ♘f5 ♗f8 62 ♘g3 ♔d4 63 ♔c2 ♔e5 64 ♔b3 ♔f4 65 ♔c4 ♗d6 66 ♔d5 ♗e7 67 ♔c4 ♔g4 68 ♔b3 ♗f8 69 ♔c4 ♔f4 70 ♔b3 ♗c5 71 ♔c4 ♗e7 72 ♔b3 ♔e5 73 ♔c4 ♗d6 74 ♔b3 ♗c5 75 ♔c4 ♗d6 76 ♔b3 ♔f4 77 ♔c4 ♔g4 78 ♘e4 ♗e7 79 ♘g3 ♗h4 80 f3+ ♔xg3 81 ♔xb4 ♔xf3

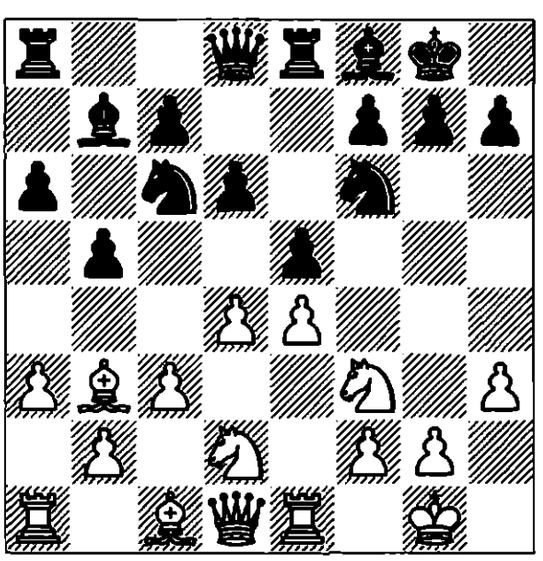
The game has reached a technical ending that is a theoretical draw, though White must be careful that his king doesn't get stranded too far from the h1-corner. In the game, he made a fatal error on move 121, and resigned two moves later.

3B: 12 a3

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8)

12 a3 *(D)*

This quiet move has many small points. Both ♗a2, keeping pressure on the a2-g8 diagonal, and ♗c2 (without being bothered by ...exd4, cxd4 ♘b4 ideas) become possible. However, White mainly signals that he is in no hurry to increase his edge. Rather he is happy not to change the nature of the play, hoping to improve his position in some small ways, indicating that he enjoys his position and is confident that he will be able to neutralize any activity Black attempts to create. Psychologically this is the ideal message to send an opponent eager for counterplay.



12...g6

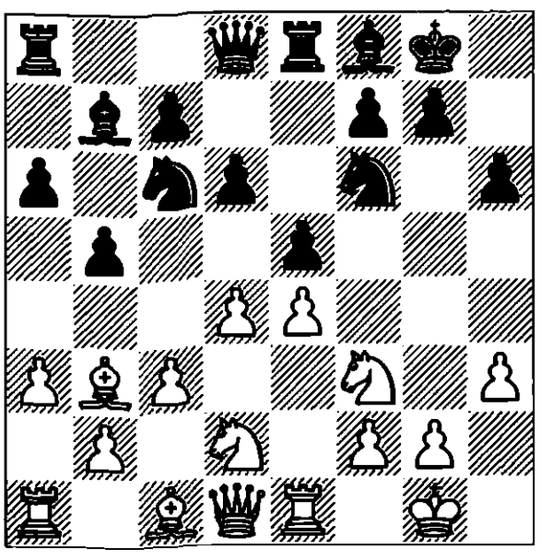
Alternatively:

a) Black should probably avoid 12...♘b8?!, as White is supposed to win after 13 dxe5 dxe5 14 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 15 ♕b3+ ♔e7 16 ♘xe5. The computers are not too convinced and put up a struggle after 16...♕d6 but White's material investment is small and in practical play we

don't think that anybody would want to defend Black's position.

b) 12...♕d7 – 9...♕*d7 10 d4* ♖*e8 11* ♘*bd2* ♗*f8 12 a3* ♗*b7*.

c) 12...h6 *(D)* is Black's most popular move and this position can be reached via different move-orders. As it might well be the safest option for Black, we shall give it a rather full coverage:



c1) 13 ♗a2 ♘b8 poses a question to the e4-pawn: 14 d5 c6 15 c4 ♘bd7 16 b4 (16 b3 ♘c5 is a good version of the Breyer for Black) 16...♘b6 17 dxc6 ♗xc6 18 ♕b3 ♖a7! (very cool) 19 ♗b2?! ♘xc4! 20 ♘xc4 bxc4 21 ♕xc4 and now Black won an exchange by 21...♗xe4! 22 ♖xe4 d5 in Sutovsky-Bacrot, Dortmund 2005.

c2) 13 ♗c2 ♘b8 is a true hybrid between the Smyslov, Zaitsev and Breyer variations, but compared to the Breyer, here Black is just in time to stop the knight hop to f1 and g3. Therefore White has to find other ways of developing the c1-bishop, normally to b2.

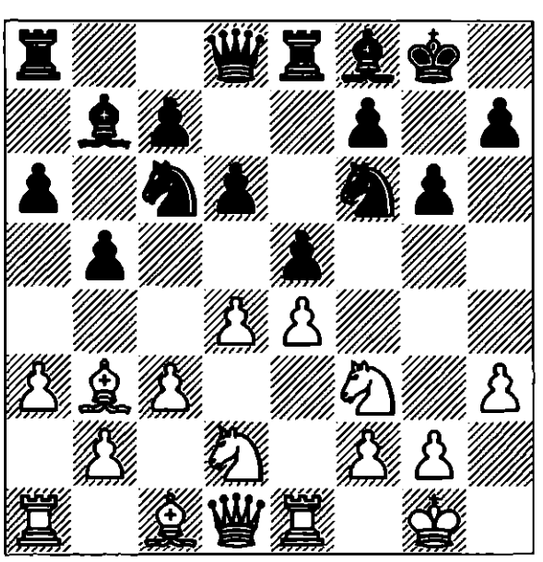
c21) 14 b3 ♘bd7 15 ♗b2 (for 15 d5 c6 16 c4, compare Line 3C) 15...g6 16 a4 c6 17 ♗d3 ♗g7 18 ♕c2. Here Yakovenko comments "The mobilization of both sides is almost complete, and it is time to decide on a plan. The only active idea for White is the c4 advance, immediately or after the preparatory b4, possibly with the inclusion of the exchange on b5 and/or e5. Therefore I decided to transfer my knight to e6, to create pressure on d4." 18...♘h5 19 ♖ad1 ♘f4 20 ♗f1 ♘e6 21 d5 (White begins forcing play, but Black's resources are sufficient; it was probably better to maintain the tension with 21 b4, when 21...♕c7 22 ♘b3 ♖ad8 23 ♘a5 ♗a8 is a variation from Yakovenko; Black is solid, but also slightly passive) 21...cxd5 22 axb5 (or 22 exd5 ♗xd5 23 axb5 axb5 24 ♗xb5 f5!) 22...axb5 23 ♗xb5 ♘c7 24 ♗a4 and now the strong 24...♖e6! protects the d6-pawn and moves out of the pin. In Motylev-Yakovenko, Moscow 2005 Black's central pawn-complex proved superior.

c22) 14 b4 ♘bd7 15 ♗b2 g6 (another game from Yakovenko went 15...c6 16 c4 exd4 17 ♘xd4 c5 18 bxc5 ♘xc5 19 cxb5 axb5 20 ♘xb5 ♘fxe4 21 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 22 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 23 ♖xe4 ♘xe4 24 ♕d5 ♘c5, when White's advantage was largely academic in Timofeev-Yakovenko, Saint Vincent ECC 2005) and now:

c221) 16 ♕b1 ♖b8 (or 16...♗g7 17 ♘b3 ♖c8 18 ♘a5 ♗a8 19 d5 ♘b6 20 a4 ♘xa4 21 ♗xa4 bxa4 22 ♖xa4 ♕d7 23 ♕a2 ♘h5 24 ♘c6 ♗b7 25 c4 ♘f4 with a promising attacking position for Black in Bologan-Z.Almasi, Dresden rpd 1997) 17 ♘b3 c5!? (a surprising move at this juncture, but it works very well in the game) 18 bxc5 dxc5 19 dxe5 ♘xe5 20 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 21 c4 ♖e6 22 cxb5 axb5 23 ♕c1 ♖c8 ∓ Vitomskis-Van Oosterom, corr. 1996.

c222) 16 c4 exd4 17 cxb5 axb5 18 ♘xd4 c6 19 a4 bxa4 (19...d5! might be even simpler, opening up the diagonal towards b4; in Svidler-Bacrot, Poikovsky 2005, White found nothing better than 20 ♘4f3 bxa4 21 e5 a3! 22 ♖xa3 ♖xa3 23 ♗xa3 ♘h5 and Black was more than OK) 20 ♗xa4 ♕b6 21 b5 cxb5 22 ♗xb5 d5! (the thematic break in this structure and always a good omen for Black) 23 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 24 ♕a4 ♘c5 25 ♕a2 ♖b8 26 exd5 ♘xd5 27 ♘c4 ♕c7 ∓ Timman-Kasparov, Hilversum (1) 1985.

We now return to 12...g6 *(D)*:



13 ♗a2

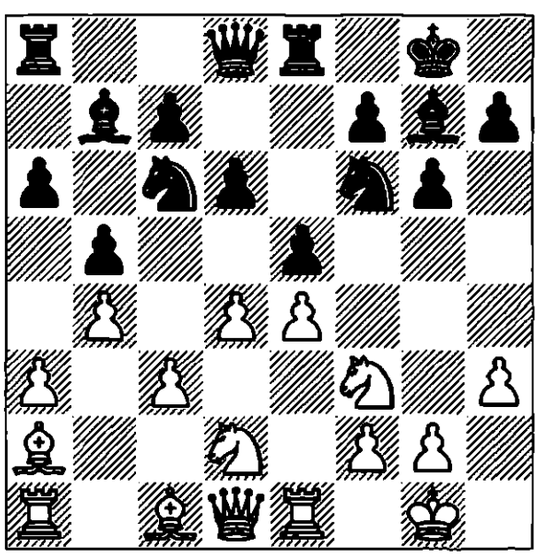
This little move stabilizes the bishop's position and prepares expansion on the queenside with b4, etc.

a) 13 ♗c2 – *12 ♗c2 g6 13 a3.*

b) 13 d5 ♘b8 14 ♘f1 ♘bd7 15 ♗a2 ♖c8 (as long as White keeps his bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal, there is a certain risk connected with the move ...c6; e.g., 15...c6? 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 ♘g5 ♖e7 18 ♕xd6 ±) 16 ♘3h2 ♘h5 17 ♘g4 ♘f4 18 ♕f3 h5 19 ♘gh2 ♘c5 20 b4 ♘cd3 21 ♖d1 ♘xc1 22 ♖axc1 c5 and Black had solved his problems successfully in Short-Sulskis, Catalan Bay 2003.

13...♗g7 14 b4 *(D)*

14 d5 ♘b8 15 ♘f1 ♘bd7 16 ♘g3 ♕e7 17 b3 c6 18 c4 bxc4 19 bxc4 led to a typical situation from the Breyer in Karpov-Gligorić, Bugojno 1978. Now we would favour 19...♘c5, followed by ...a5 and ...♗a6 and a rook to the b-file, with normal play. Instead after 19...cxd5?! (we are reluctant to criticize a player of Gligorić's calibre, but we find it difficult to comprehend this move, which simply increases the scope of the a2-bishop) 20 cxd5 ♘c5 Karpov had no problems increasing his edge: 21 ♗d2 ♖ec8 22 ♗a5 ♗h6 23 ♖b1 ♖cb8 24 ♘d2 ♗c8 25 ♘c4 ±.



B

14...a5

Here, the solid 14...♕d7!? 15 ♗b2 ♖ad8 is very possible as well, as in Ibragimov-Cela, Greek Cht 1999. This is in the spirit of the Regrouping System that we advocate in Chapter 5.

15 d5 ♘e7 16 ♗b2

The bishop may appear somewhat out of play here, but the pawns on c3 and d4 are not fixed, so it is likely that there will be some action on the long diagonal quite soon.

a) 16 bxa5 ♖xa5 (16...c6!?) 17 c4 is also interesting. *NCO*'s evaluation is 'equal'; here is some help for the practical player searching for relevant candidate moves for Black:

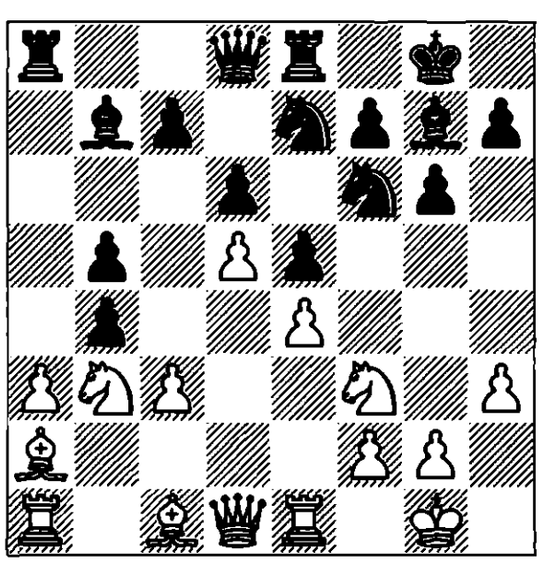
a1) In case of 17...bxc4 18 ♘xc4 ♖a6, we trust An.Bykhovsky's evaluation ±.

a2) After 17...c6 18 dxc6 ♗xc6 19 ♗b2 it's not at all clear that Black can equalize fully:

a21) The unfortunate decentralizing plan 19...♕a8?! 20 c5! dxc5 21 ♘b3 ♖a7 22 ♘xc5 gave White dangerous pressure in Gufeld-Timoshchenko, Volgodonsk 1981, despite everything eventually ending peacefully: 22...♘d7 23 ♘xd7 ♖xd7 24 ♕c2 (24 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 25 ♕b3+ ♔f8 26 ♘g5 was analysed by Gufeld in *Informator*, leading to a great advantage for White) 24...♘c8 25 ♖ac1 ♗b7 26 ♕c5 ♖de7 27 ♕xb5? (27 ♕b4!, with the idea ♖c5, keeps White's advantage; after the move in the game, everything peters out quickly) 27...♘d6 28 ♕b6 ♘xe4 29 ♖c7 ♖xc7 30 ♕xc7 ♗d5 31 ♗xd5 ½-½.

a22) Considering that c5, applying pressure on f7, is among White's plans, 19...h6 appears to be a useful, non-committal move.

b) After 16 ♘b3 axb4 *(D)*, there are two important games by Kveinys:



W

b1) Kveinys-Ibragimov, Warsaw 1991 continued 17 axb4. Then:

b11) Adams analysed the knight sacrifice 17...♘xe4!? in this position as well – compare line 'b2'. The lines are extremely messy: 18 ♖xe4 ♘xd5 (18...♗xd5?! 19 ♖e1, on the other hand, gives Black insufficient compensation)

19 ♘a5 ♘xc3! (but not 19...♖xa5? 20 bxa5 ♘xc3, which is refuted by 21 ♗xf7+! with a large advantage for White in all lines) 20 ♘xb7 ♖xa2 21 ♖xa2 ♕c8 22 ♕b3 ♘xe4 23 ♘a5 c5 and he concluded that the position is unclear.

b12) 17...♖b8 18 ♘a5 ♗a8 19 ♗g5 h6 20 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 21 ♕d2 ♗g7 22 ♗b3 ♔h7 23 c4 happened in the game mentioned above and here we recommend the immediate 23...f5!, which seems to give Black sufficient counterplay.

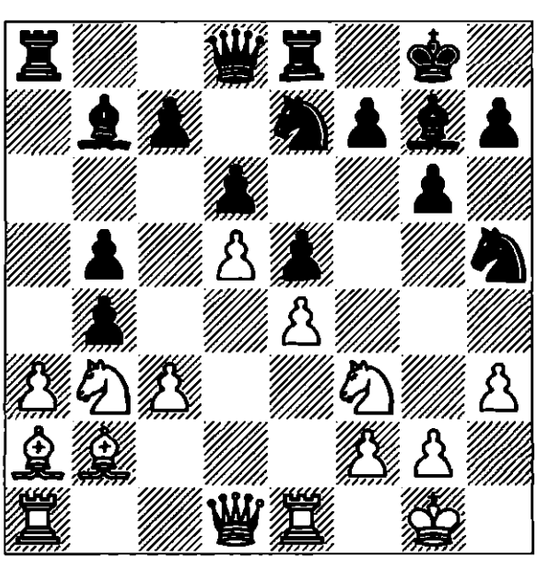
b13) A third try for Black is Alexander Ivanov's untested 17...c6 18 ♘a5 ♖xa5! 19 bxa5 cxd5 20 exd5 ♕xa5 with definite compensation.

b2) In a later game Kveinys deviated with 17 cxb4, when the knight sacrifice 17...♘xe4! is much more tempting; e.g., 18 ♖xe4 ♗xd5 and now:

b21) 19 ♖e1 e4 20 ♘fd4 c5 has scored 100% for Black in practice. Chiburdanidze-A.Ivanov, USSR U-26 Ch (Riga) 1980 continued 21 bxc5 (21 ♘xb5 ♕b6!) 21...dxc5 22 ♘xc5 ♗xa2 23 ♖xa2 ♕xd4 24 ♕xd4 ♗xd4 25 ♘xe4 ♘f5 26 ♖ae2 ♖e6 and Ivanov gives 27 ♔f1 with equality.

b22) 19 ♖e2 e4 20 ♘g5 ♗xa1 21 ♘xa1 ♗xa2 22 ♖xa2 is Kveinys-Jenni, Bad Wörishofen 2003, but here, instead of the positionally undesirable 22...d5?, which immediately weakens the dark-square complex, we advocate the computer's 22...♘f5!, when the silicon brain gives a great advantage for Black. An important variation is 23 ♕d5 ♕e7 24 ♖e2 c6! 25 ♕d1 ♕f6! 26 ♘b3 and only now 26...d5, when it isn't easy for White to develop any initiative.

16...♘h5 17 ♘b3 axb4 *(D)*



18 axb4

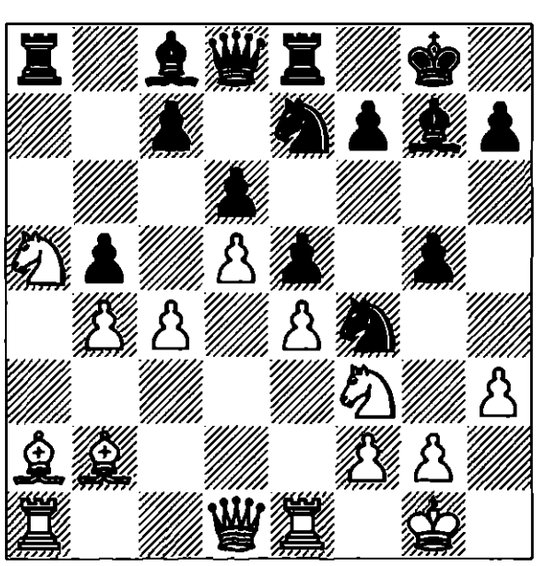
Adams chooses the classical approach, capturing towards the centre. Now he has the additional option of c4 instead of playing exclusively against the c7-pawn, which would be the case after the alternative recapture. It must be said, however, that in his comments Adams hints that 18 cxb4 may have been the stronger option. 18...♗c8 19 ♘a5 ♘f4, and now:

a) 20 ♗c1 ♗h6 21 ♖b1 ♔h8 22 ♖b3 f5 (Black seems to have excellent counterplay at this point) 23 ♗b1 ♖f8 24 ♔h2 ♘g8 25 ♘c6 ♕e8 and now Kuporosov-Ibragimov, Gorky 1989 ended in a surprising draw by repetition: 26 ♗b2 ♗g7 27 ♗c1 ♗h6 28 ♗b2 ♗g7 29 ♗c1 ♗h6 ½-½.

b) Adams gave 20 ♖c1 in *Informator*, with a small advantage for White. However, such an evaluation is not very helpful in a tense position like this. We believe Black's counterplay is very real after 20...h6, preparing the thematic ...f5 with moves like ...♔h7 and ...♖f8. The c7-pawn can always be defended with ...♖a7 if needed. The problem with the immediate 20...f5?! is the tactic 21 ♘xe5!.

18...♗c8 19 ♘a5 ♘f4 20 c4 g5! *(D)*

Wedberg gives 20...♗d7?! as interesting here, but this looks dodgy after 21 c5!, etc. 20...bxc4 doesn't contribute to Black's initiative on the kingside and after 21 ♗xc4 White will be the quicker. We would like to point out that at this point the position bears a striking similarity to the King's Indian.



21 cxb5

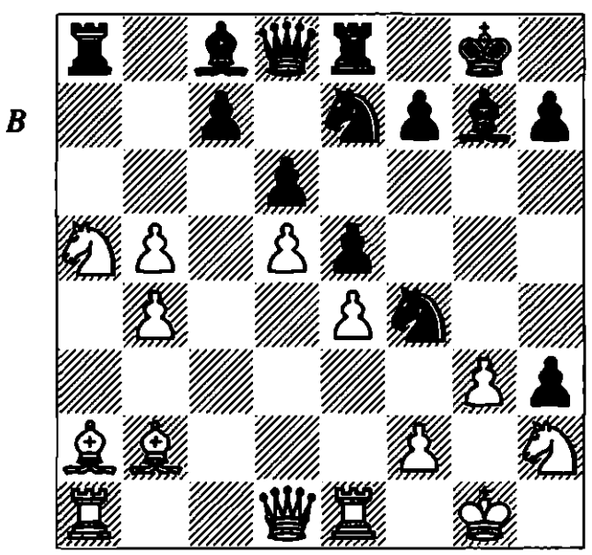
21 ♘xg5?! is clearly very risky because of 21...♘exd5! (Adams's 21...♘eg6 22 ♘f3 ♕d7!,

threatening a devastating blow on g2, is also more than sufficient); for example, 22 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 23 cxb5!? (needless to say, a computer try...) 23...♗e6! and Black develops a strong attack regardless of which piece White recaptures with.

21...g4 22 ♘h2!

After 22 hxg4 ♗xg4 it is easier for Black to develop an attack, the pin being very annoying for White; then 23 ♘c6 ♘xc6 24 bxc6 ♕f6 is a variation from Wedberg.

22...gxh3 23 g3 *(D)*



Now 23...♘g2! is quite promising for Black; e.g.:

a) 24 ♖e2 f5 25 ♘c6 ♕d7 26 ♗c4 ♖xa1 27 ♕xa1 fxe4 28 ♕a7 (or 28 ♖xe4 ♕f5) 28...e3 29 fxe3 ♘f5!, when the computers greatly prefer Black.

b) Adams gave 24 ♖f1 f5 25 ♘c6 ♕d7 26 exf5 ♕xf5 27 ♕d2 with an unclear position. Again the computers are inclined to prefer Black.

Conclusion:

The lines are complicated and double-edged, but we believe that Black holds his fair share of the stocks. It has to be admitted that 12...h6 is the more solid option for Black, and we refer our more cautious readers to that line.

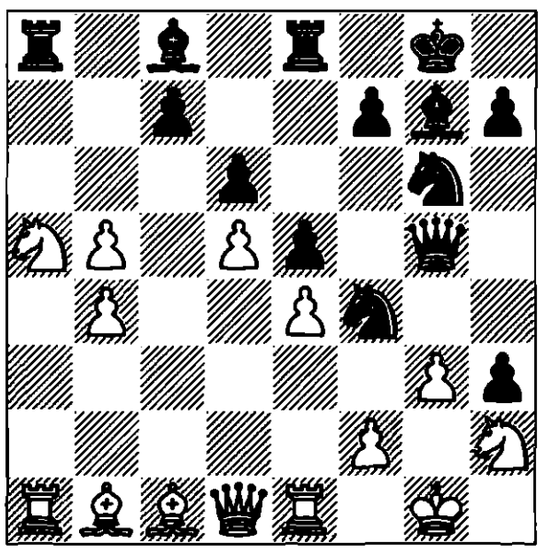
Illustrative Game 9

Adams – Grishchuk
Wijk aan Zee 2002

23...♘eg6?!

This over-optimistic move was criticized by various sources.

24 ♗b1! ♕g5 25 ♗c1! *(D)*



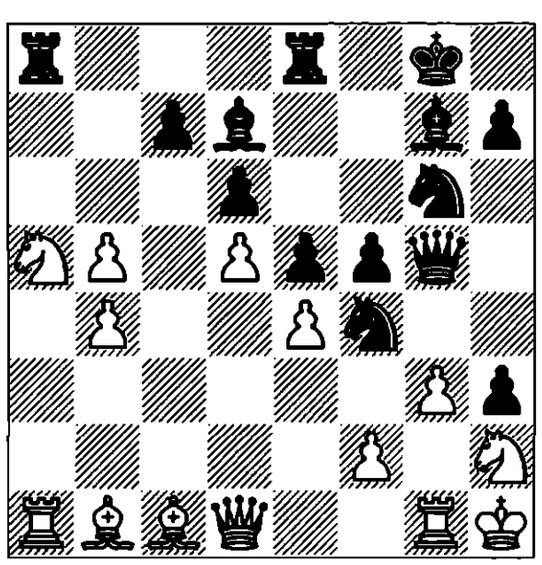
Excellent defence! The bishops are long-distance pieces and work at full power from the edge of the board.

It is clear that White has repelled the assault and enjoys a definite plus.

25...♗d7?

It was time to admit failure and try to untangle with the psychologically difficult retreat 25...♘f8 26 ♔h1 ♕g6, although White enjoys a clear plus and can return to play on the queenside. It is noteworthy, however, that Adams himself still wasn't absolutely convinced that White was better after 25...♘e7 26 ♔h1 ♕g6 27 ♖g1 ♘g2 intending a quick ...f5. This says something about the tenacity of the black initiative on the kingside.

26 ♔h1 f5 27 ♖g1 *(D)*



The f4-knight is doomed.

27...♕f6 28 exf5 ♗xf5 29 ♗xf5 ♕xf5 30 gxf4

White simply cashes in.

30...exf4 31 ♖a3 ♕e4+ 32 ♕f3 ♕xb4 33 ♘c6 ♕xb5 34 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 35 ♕e4

Now material is nominally even, but White can pick up Black's pawns any time he wants to. However, for the moment Black's king is a more tempting target.

35...♕c5 36 ♘g4 ♖f8 37 ♗d2 ♔h8 38 ♗b4 ♕b5 39 ♔h2 f3 40 ♗d2 ♕e2 41 ♗e3 ♖f4 42 ♕b1 ♖f7 43 ♘d8 1-0

3C: 12 ♗c2 and Rare 12th Moves

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8)

12 ♗c2

This is very flexible and can fit in well with the quiet a3 systems, but it's more frequently a preparation for d5 followed by b3 and c4, securing a spatial plus in the centre and on the queenside.

a) 12 ♘f1? is a common 'mouse-slip', to use ICC jargon: 12...exd4 13 cxd4 ♘a5 ∓.

b) 12 ♘g5!? ♖e7 13 f4 (13 d5 ♘a5 = *NCO*; e.g., 14 ♗c2 c6 15 b4 ♘c4 16 ♘xc4 bxc4 17 dxc6 ♗xc6 18 a4 ♗b7 = Timman-Karpov, Bugojno 1980) must, however, be treated with some respect: 13...h6 14 ♘xf7!? (14 ♘df3?! ♕e8! 15 fxe5?! dxe5 16 dxe5 ♖d8! 17 ♕c2 ♘xe5 18 ♘xe5 hxg5 19 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 20 ♗xg5 ♕e5 21 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 22 ♕b3+ ♔g6 and Black was winning in Arnason-Geller, Reykjavik 1986) 14...♖xf7 15 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 16 ♕b3+ and at this point the computer advocates the slightly exotic-seeming 16...♔g6!? completing the little circle-dance with ...♔h7 on the next move.

12...g6 *(D)*

This is Black's smoothest way to develop.

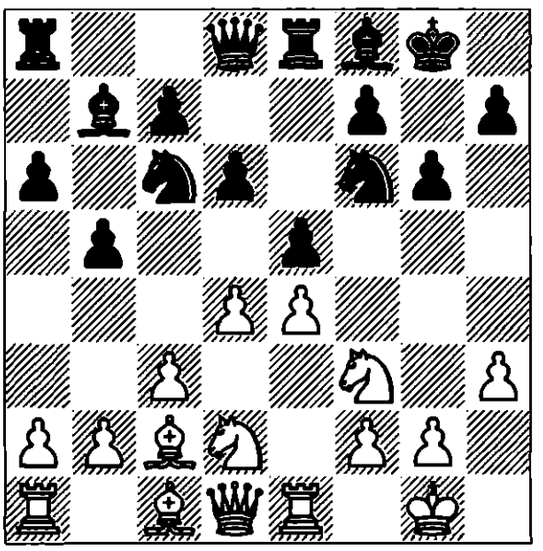
a) 12...♕d7 – *9...♕d7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 ♗c2 ♗b7.*

b) 12...♘b8 will lead to a main line of the Breyer.

c) 12...h6 13 d5 (13 a3 – *12 a3 h6 13 ♗c2*; 13 a4 is a Main-Line Zaitsev, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2) 13...♘b8 14 b3 c6 15 c4 ♘bd7 should be compared with the main line.

13 d5

This is White's most popular move at this point and quite natural as White has already

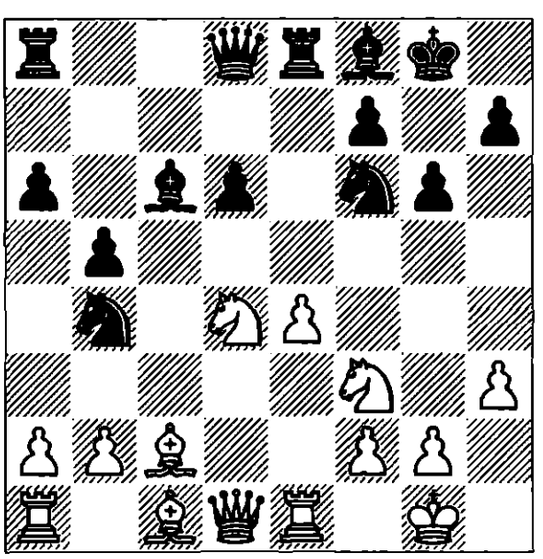

W

deserted the a2-g8 diagonal, and it allows him to complete development. It can also be seen as the prelude to a central bind if White follows up with a quick b3 and c4.

The alternatives are not too impressive:

a) 13 ♘f1? is a positional blunder again as after 13...exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 Black wins the bishop-pair. Kiriazis-Dervishi, Athens 1997 was instructive: 15 d5 c6 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 ♘g3 ♘xc2 18 ♕xc2 ♖c8 19 ♕d3 ♘d7 20 ♗g5 ♕b6 21 ♖ad1 ♘c5 22 ♕b1 ♕b7 23 ♘d2 ♗g7 24 ♗f4 d5 25 exd5 ♗xd5 26 f3 ♕b6 27 ♔h1 ♕f6 28 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 29 ♘df1 ♗xf3 0-1.

b) 13 ♘b3?! exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4! should be compared to line 'a' above. True, things are slightly more complicated here, as after 15 d5 the automatic 15...♘xc2? 16 ♕xc2 leads to White's advantage (♘a5 is a strong positional threat). Instead 15...c6! equalizes comfortably; e.g., 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 ♘bd4 *(D)* and now:


B

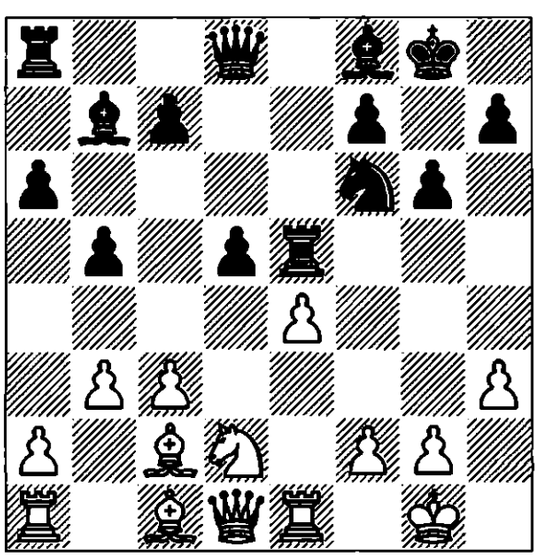
b1) 17...♗xe4 led almost by force to a draw in Geller-Beliavsky, USSR Ch (Tbilisi) 1978:

18 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 19 ♖xe4 ♘xe4 20 a3 ♘d5 21 ♘c6 ♕b6 ½-½. It is perpetual check after 22 ♕xd5 ♕xf2+, etc.

b2) 17...♗b7!? is a winning attempt: 18 ♗b1 ♗g7 19 ♗d2 ♘c6 20 ♗c3 ♘e5 21 a4 b4! 22 ♗xb4 ♘xf3+ 23 ♘xf3 (no better is 23 ♕xf3 d5! 24 e5 ♘e4 ∓) 23...♘xe4 ∓ Tseshkovsky-Psakhis, USSR Ch (Minsk) 1987.

c) 13 a4 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 looks quite similar to the main lines considered in Chapter 1, but Black has saved the tempo ...h6, and can now play in Benoni-style: 16...♗g7 17 ♘f1 ♘d7 18 ♘1h2 ♕e7 19 ♖a3 ♕f8 20 h4 bxa4 21 ♕xa4 ♘b6 22 ♕b3 and here 22...a5 gave Black a strong initiative on the queenside in Cuijpers-Van der Sterren, Rotterdam 1990. Incidentally, the computer's energetic 22...f5!? could very well be even stronger, undermining White's stronghold in the centre at its roots.

d) 13 b3 should be met by the typical and strategically well motivated 13...d5!, equalizing the central situation. After 14 dxe5 (not 14 exd5 ♘xd5 with an immediate threat to the c3-pawn) 14...♘xe5 15 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 *(D)*, White has tried two moves:



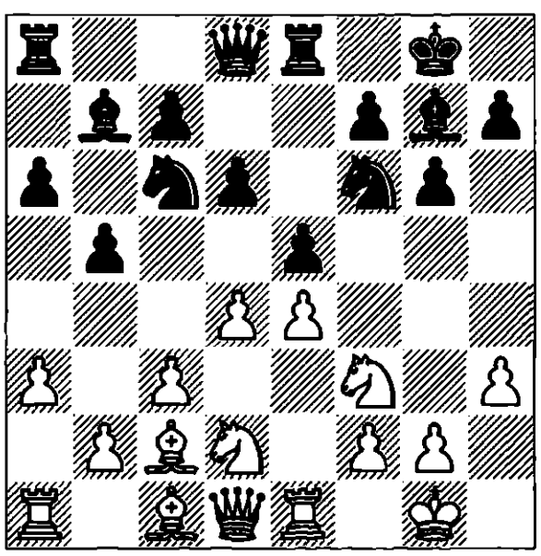
d1) 16 ♘f3 ♖xe4! 17 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 and now:

d11) The original game went 18 ♗b2 ♗g7 19 ♕c2 ♕f6 20 b4 c5 21 bxc5 ♘xc5 22 ♖e2 ♖c8 23 ♖ae1 ♘e4 and it was obvious that Black had full compensation in Tseshkovsky-Beliavsky, Tashkent 1980.

d12) This general evaluation was later confirmed when in Ivanchuk-Leko, Dortmund 1995 a draw was immediately agreed after 18 ♕c2 c5.

d2) 16 f4 ♖e8 (16...♗c5+ 17 ♔h2 ♖xe4!? 18 ♘xe4 dxe4 worked well in Hübner-Beliavsky, Tilburg 1986 after 19 ♗e3 ♗xe3 20 ♖xe3 ♘d5, etc., but we are not sure if we trust Black's compensation after a move like 19 ♕e2!? instead) 17 e5 ♗c5+ 18 ♔h2 ♘h5 and Black has done well in practice from this position as White's most natural way of defending the f4-pawn, 19 ♘f3, fails to 19...♗f2! followed by ...♗g3+. That means he has to resort to a move like 19 ♕f3 instead, after which 19...f6! looks like good counterplay for Black.

e) 13 a3 ♗g7 *(D)* and now:



e1) 14 d5 ♘b8 (= *NCO*) 15 c4 c6 16 b4 ♕c7 17 ♗b2 bxc4 18 dxc6 ♘xc6 19 ♘xc4 ♖ad8 and Black was in good shape in Sax-Short, Biel IZ 1985.

e2) Against 14 b4 we again recommend 14...d5!; e.g., 15 dxe5 ♘xe5 16 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 17 f4 (or 17 ♘f3 ♖xe4!) 17...♖xe4! 18 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 and even the computers give the exchange sacrifice their stamp of approval.

e3) 14 ♘b3 (this doesn't look like the right square for the knight of course, but the problems with going to f1 will become apparent in the next note) 14...a5 15 d5 ♘b8 16 a4 c6 17 dxc6 (or 17 axb5 cxd5 18 exd5 and here 18...♕c7! looks like the most precise move, only recapturing on d5 on the next move) 17...♗xc6 18 axb5 ♗xb5 19 ♗g5 ♕c7 20 ♘bd2 ♘bd7 21 ♘f1 ♗c6 22 ♘3d2 d5 ½-½ Hübner-P.Nikolić, Wijk aan Zee 1992.

e4) That leaves us with the natural 14 ♘f1, which, however, is under a cloud because of the by now well-known mechanism 14...d5!; e.g., 15 dxe5 (15 exd5 ♘xd5 16 ♗g5 ♕d7 was

absolutely fine for Black in Ochsner-Wallace, Stockholm 1996) 15...♘xe4! 16 ♗f4 ♘a5 17 ♘1d2 ♘c4 18 ♘xc4 bxc4 19 ♘d2 ♘c5 20 b3 cxb3 21 ♘xb3 ♘e6 22 ♗g3 c5 23 ♖b1 ♗c6 24 ♕d2 a5 and Black had firmly seized the initiative and went on to win in Adams-Nikolić, Manila IZ 1990.

13...♘b8 14 b3

14 c4 c6 15 b3 – *14 b3 c6 15 c4.*

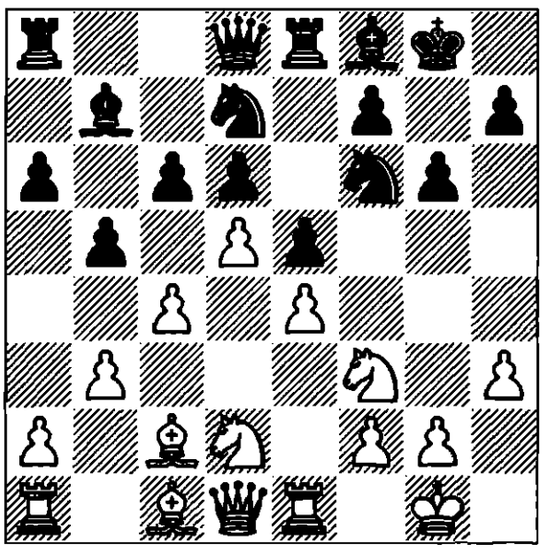
14...c6 15 c4 ♘bd7

This position may also arise from the Breyer move-order *9...♘b8 10 d4 ♘bd7 11 ♘bd2 ♗b7 12 ♗c2 ♖e8 13 b3!?* (instead of the normal *13 ♘f1 ♗f8 14 ♘g3) 13...♗f8 14 d5 c6 15 c4 g6.* Incidentally, Black's standard plan was first explained to me (Leif) by a 13-year-old Magnus Carlsen, after a friendly blitz game we had played in the Breyer. At the time of writing it seems to frustrate white players enough to cause a renaissance of the old main line in the Breyer (15 a4) instead of the central expansion (15 b3 intending d5 and c4). See 'Broaden Your Horizon' in the Introduction for more on this. What Magnus explained was that Black should take once on c4, put a knight on c5 and follow up with ...a5 and ...♗a6, creating pressure against White's c4-pawn. He had played precisely this way himself as Black in a recent game from the under-14 world championship and experienced no problems whatsoever. In that game he even succeeded with a model plan ...♗g7, ...♕e7-f8 and then finally ...♗h6, executing the positionally-desirable exchange of the dark-squared bishops. For the curious reader we refer to the game Rohit-Carlsen, Khalkidhiki U-14 Wch 2003. However, it would not be fair to omit GM Sashikiran when discussing these positions, as he is a connoisseur on the black side and has played numerous instructive games.

We now return to 15...♘bd7 *(D)*:

16 ♘f1

By now this move probably seems second nature, but in Bruzon-Bacrot, Lausanne 2001, White first tried to stop ...a5 by putting a pawn there himself: 16 a4!? bxc4 17 bxc4 ♘c5 (after 17...a5, the move 18 ♘b3 has caused some headaches for Black in practice) 18 a5!? ♕c7 19 ♘f1 ♖ec8 20 ♗g5 ♗g7 21 ♖a2 ♖ab8 22 ♘3h2 ♗a8 23 ♕f3 ♘e8 24 ♘g4 cxd5 25 cxd5 ♖b5 26 ♕a3 ♖cb8 and in this instructive example between two young connoisseurs of the Ruy

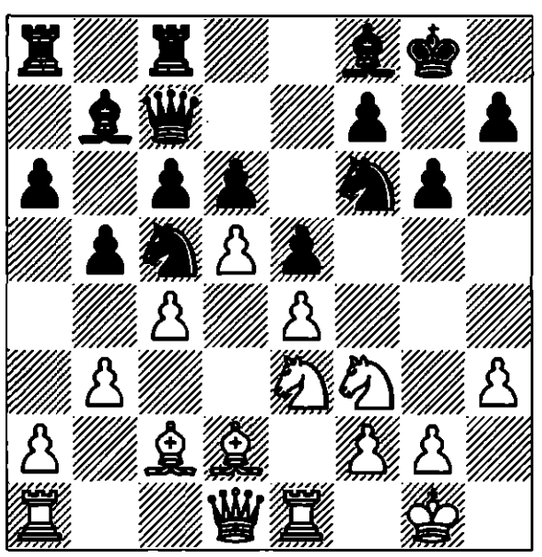


Lopez, Black had succeeded in creating counterplay on the queenside and was in good shape.

16...♕c7 17 ♗e3

Or:

a) For 17 ♘e3 ♖ec8, *ECO* refers to the Breyer Variation, but it can obviously also arise from the Zaitsev. After 18 ♗d2 ♘c5 *(D)*, White has tried:



a1) 19 ♘g4 ♘xg4 20 hxg4 cxd5 21 cxd5 ♘a4! (Black solves his problems tactically) 22 ♗d3 ♘b2 23 ♕e2 ♘xd3 24 ♕xd3 ♕c2 = Psakhis-Smejkal, Szirak 1986.

a2) 19 dxc6 ♗xc6 20 ♘d5 ♘xd5 21 cxd5 ♗d7 22 ♖c1 ♕d8 23 ♗b1 ♘b7?! (we don't understand this; after White's next move the knight is out of play for a long time; 23...a5! looks like an obvious improvement, when Black has a rather promising set-up on the queenside) 24 b4! ♖xc1 25 ♕xc1 ♖c8 26 ♕b2 ♗g7 27 ♖c1 ♖xc1+ 28 ♕xc1 ♕c8 29 ♕xc8+ ♗xc8 30 g4 with a slight advantage for White, Geller-Timoshchenko, Plovdiv 1988.

b) In Psakhis-Agdestein, Novi Sad OL 1990, our compatriot defended the black side after 17 ♗g5 ♖ec8 18 ♖c1 ♗e7 19 ♘g3 bxc4 20 bxc4 a5 21 ♗d2 ♘c5 22 ♗e3 and here he had to make a difficult choice:

b1) On 22...♗a6, White can consider 23 ♗xc5 dxc5 24 ♗a4!? cxd5 25 exd5 (25 cxd5 ♖ab8 is fine for Black) 25...♗d6 26 ♕d2, when the computers greatly prefer White, although it doesn't look that clear to us.

b2) When we spoke to Simen about this game, he immediately mentioned the improvement 22...♘fd7!?, which looks good for Black. He intends to follow up with ...♗a6 and maybe even ...♘b6, applying pressure on White's c4-pawn.

b3) In the game, he continued 22...cxd5 23 cxd5 ♕d8 which might not be too bad for Black, but it is clearly a concession to capture on d5 and it makes White's life a lot easier once he doesn't have the c4-pawn to worry about any more.

17...♖ec8 18 ♖c1 bxc4 19 bxc4 ♘c5

Black is in good shape.

Conclusion:

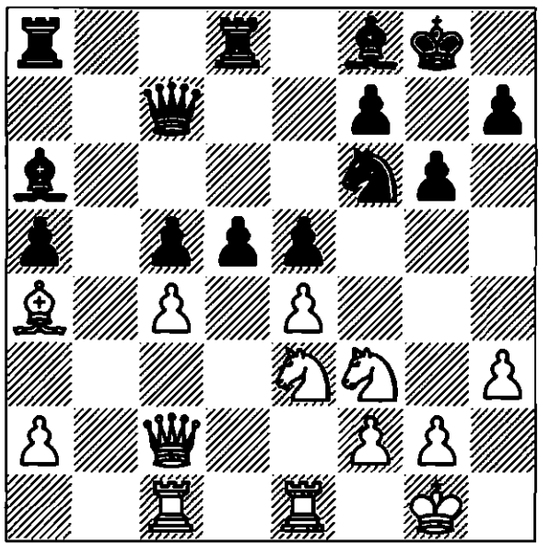
The middlegames are very reminiscent of the Breyer Variation. With his strong central pawn-chain, White should be slightly better by traditional standards, but if Black knows what he is doing, we believe he should hold on comfortably and even manage to turn the tables if White is incautious.

Illustrative Game 10

Cuijpers – Van der Sterren
Rotterdam 1990

White decided to change the nature of the play now by capturing on c5, which is rarely a very good idea in these positions.

20 ♗xc5 dxc5 21 ♘e3 ♖d8 22 ♕d3 a5 23 ♗a4 ♗a6 24 ♕c2 cxd5 *(D)*



25 exd5?!

We believe 25 cxd5! is positionally more desirable. It correlates with the old saying of capturing towards the centre and keeps White's pawn-chain intact. In addition, the c5-pawn will be a realistic target in the future and the c4-square is quite inviting for a white knight. After the text-move, Black has the idea of transferring his knight to the blockading square d6 and then following up with ...♗g7 and an advance of his kingside pawn-majority. In short: he has easy play.

25...♖ab8 26 a3 ♗g7 27 ♖ed1 ♘e8 28 ♗xe8

Probably necessary, because Black's position would be very comfortable if his knight reached d6.

28...♖xe8 29 d6!?

This looks very natural, but only leads to an opening of the position which should favour Black's bishops.

29...♕d7 30 ♕d2 e4

By now it is clear that Black has a substantial edge. The next few moves are not of high quality, however, and may have been influenced by time-trouble.

31 ♘e1 ♕d8 32 ♘d5 ♕xd6 33 ♕xa5 ♕c6

There was no reason to part with material so readily. 33...♗d4! looks highly satisfactory for Black.

34 ♘c7 ♗b7

Here 34...♖ec8! 35 ♘xa6 ♖a8 would save everything. Still, Black gets decent compensation in form of very promising play on the diagonals towards White's king.

35 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 36 ♖d8 ♗d4 37 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 38 ♘c2 *(D)*

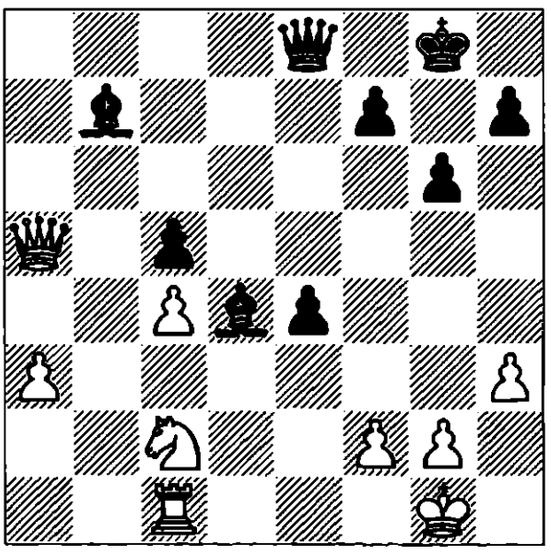
38...e3 39 ♘xd4 cxd4

The position has become highly complex and Black's practical chances shouldn't be underestimated.

40 ♖e1 ♕e4 41 ♕d8+ ♔g7 42 ♕g5 h6?

42...f5 43 fxe3 f4 is better.

43 ♕g3 e2 44 f3 ♕e6 45 ♕f2 ♕xc4 46 ♕xe2 ♕c3 47 a4 ♔h7 48 ♕e7 ♗d5 49 ♔h2?

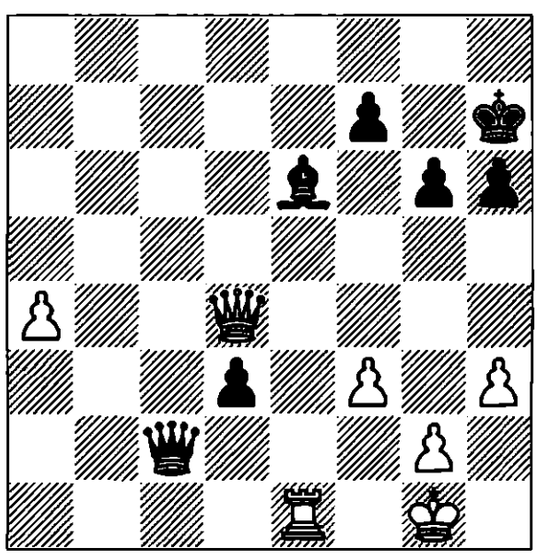


49 ♕e5! should win.

49...d3 50 ♕e3? ♗c4?

Somewhat surprisingly, 50...♕c7+! wins immediately for Black.

51 ♖c1 ♕b3 52 ♕f4 ♗e6 53 ♕d4 ♕b8+ 54 ♔g1 ♕b3 55 ♖e1 ♕c2 *(D)*



56 ♔h2?

In fact, White would be winning after 56 ♖e3! ♗c4 (56...d2 57 ♖d3 +–) due to the mating attack after 57 ♖e8!.

56...d2 57 ♖g1 ♗b3 58 a5 d1♕ 59 ♖xd1 ♕xd1 0-1

3D: Rare 10th and 11th Moves

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7)

Here we shall concentrate on a few lines where White plays an early a4 (and a few odds and ends that don't fit in elsewhere). Generally they will transpose to lines covered earlier if White follows up with a quick ♘bd2.

10 d4

Alternatively White can hold back with his d-pawn:

a) 10 d3 will generally transpose to Line 6E, the Pilnik Variation.

b) 10 a4 can have some independent significance:

b1) 10...b4!? leads to a position very similar to the one we consider after *9 a4 b4* (Line 6F) but with the marginally useful extra move h3 for White while Black has played ...♗b7, which is not necessarily the ideal square for the bishop in these positions. Still, after 11 a5 ♖b8 12 d4 bxc3 13 bxc3 exd4 14 cxd4 d5 15 e5 ♘e4 Black was active and doing well in Fedorov-A.Ivanov, Las Vegas 1993.

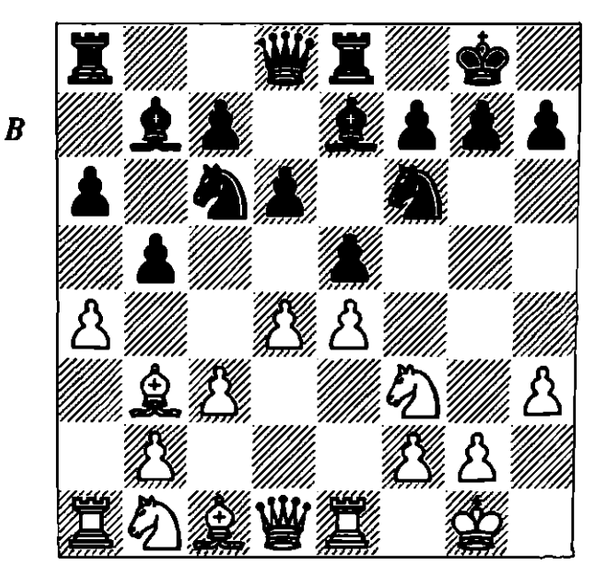
b2) 10...♖e8 11 d3 (11 ♘g5 ♖f8 12 ♘f3 repeats; 11 d4 transposes to the main line) 11...h6 12 ♘bd2 ♗f8 13 ♘f1 ♘a5 14 ♗c2 c5 15 ♘g3 d5 16 ♕e2 ♕b6 17 ♘h2 b4 18 ♘g4 ♖ad8 and Black's space advantage gave him an easy game in L'Ami-Solleveld, Dieren 2001.

10...♖e8 11 a4!? *(D)*

White has two other moves that demand a certain tactical alertness from Black:

a) 11 ♗g5?! ♘xe4!; e.g., 12 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 13 dxe5 (13 ♕c2 c5 is also slightly better for Black) 13...♘g6 14 exd6 ♕xd6 15 ♕xd6 ♘xd6 ∓.

b) 11 dxe5 ♘xe5 (but not 11...dxe5? 12 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 13 ♕b3+, which is embarrassing for Black) 12 ♘xe5 dxe5 13 ♕f3 c5 14 ♘d2 c4 15 ♗c2 ♕c7 16 ♘f1 ♖ad8 17 ♘g3 ♘d7 and Black's knight is on its way to d3, securing him at least equal chances, Mi.Tseitlin-Vasiukov, USSR Spartakiad (Moscow) 1979.



11...h6

This seems a rational choice as it is likely to transpose back to main lines we have already studied.

a) 11...♕d7!? is a direct transposition to a position we consider in Line 5E (*9...♕d7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 a4 ♗b7*).

b) It looks like 11...♗f8?! is inaccurate as it allows White to demonstrate the advantages of developing his knight to a3 (and keeping the option of ♗g5 open). 12 d5, and then:

b1) 12...♘a5?! fails mainly tactical reasons: 13 ♗a2 c6 14 ♘a3 cxd5?! (14...♖c8!? 15 axb5 axb5 16 b4 ♘c4 gives White a slight advantage) 15 exd5 bxa4 (15...♖c8 ±; 15...♕d7 16 ♗g5!) 16 ♕xa4 ♘xd5 (16...♗xd5 17 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 18 ♘c2! ♘b7 19 ♕c6 +–) 17 ♘g5! and Black is unable to fend off White's threats:

b11) 17...h6 18 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 19 ♖d1 ♔g8 20 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 21 ♗xd5+ ♔h8 22 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 23 ♕xa5 +–.

b12) 17...♖e7 18 b4 ♘xc3 19 ♕c2! +– Karpov-Miles, London 1984.

b2) 12...♘e7 13 axb5 (another possibility is 13 ♗g5 ♘d7 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♘a3 ♘c5 16 ♗c2 c6 17 b4 ♘a4 18 dxc6 ♗xc6 19 ♘xb5 ± de Firmian-Hjartarson, Qaqortoq 2003) 13...axb5 14 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 15 ♘a3 (this is the standard plan for White and the motivation behind the whole line: first isolate the b5-pawn by playing d5, and then attack it with ♘a3) 15...♕d7 16 ♗g5 c6 17 dxc6 ♗xc6 18 ♘c2 ♕b7 19 ♗xf6 gxf6 20 ♘d2 ± Oll-J.C.Rodriguez, Dos Hermanas 1992.

12 d5

White doesn't have a lot of independent options here:

a) 12 ♘bd2 ♗f8 – *11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 h6.*

b) 12 axb5 axb5 13 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 14 ♘a3 b4 15 ♘c4 ♗f8 16 d5 ♘a5 17 ♘xa5 ♕xa5 18 cxb4 ♕xb4 19 ♗d2 ♕b6 20 ♕c2 c6 21 dxc6 ♗xc6 22 ♗c4 ♕b7 was very comfortable for Black who had strong influence on the central squares in Olafsson-Panno, Los Angeles 1963.

c) After the immediate 12 ♘a3, Black has 12...exd4! 13 cxd4 ♗f8!, when White experiences some difficulties protecting his e4-pawn in a harmonious way; e.g., 14 d5 (14 ♗c2 ♘b4) 14...♘a5 15 ♗c2 b4 16 ♗d2!? (16 ♘b1 c6 is obviously excellent for Black) 16...c5 17 ♘b1 and now 17...g6 followed by ...♗g7 looks like a very good version of the Modern Benoni for Black. His mobile queenside pawn-majority is paralysing White.

12...♘a5

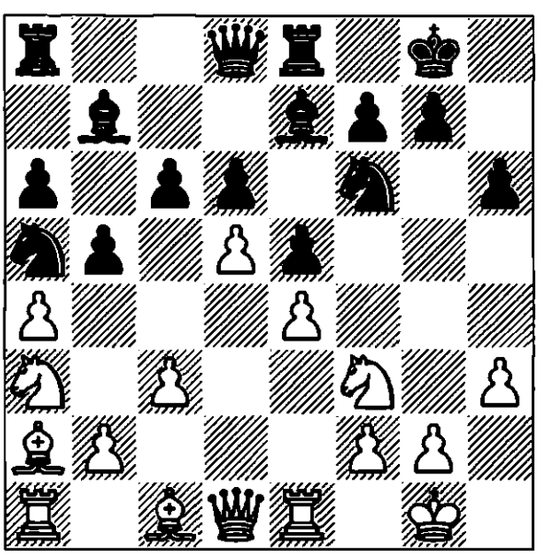
12...♘b8 may be playable too, but the text-move is the most principled.

13 ♗a2

After 13 ♗c2 c6 14 dxc6 ♗xc6 15 ♘bd2 ♗f8 16 b4, we are not sure about 16...♘b7 as in the game Velimirović-Ilinčić, Yugoslav Ch (Kladovo) 1990. There is a certain danger connected with tucking away the knight like this – even if it's not intended to be permanent. After 17 ♗b2 ♕c7 18 ♕e2 we believe that White is better. The game continued 18...d5 19 exd5 ♘xd5 20 axb5 ♗xb5 and here we recommend for White 21 ♕e4 ♘f6 22 ♕h4, when Black still has some work to do. Instead we quite like the look of the untested 16...♘c4; e.g., 17 ♘xc4 bxc4 18 ♕e2 ♖c8 and Black must be OK as 19 ♘d2 is obviously met by 19...d5.

13...c6 14 ♘a3 *(D)*

B



It is this knight development that gives the line a distinct flavour.

14...♕c7

14...cxd5 15 exd5 has scored badly in practice and cannot be recommended.

15 ♘h4

This knight will be excellently posted on f5, and it seems that Black cannot exploit the fact that it is temporarily exposed.

a) Black's tactical point is that after 15 b4 ♘c4! his queen will either protect his knight on c4 or win back the c3-pawn; e.g., 16 ♘xc4 bxc4 17 dxc6 (17 ♗xc4 cxd5 18 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 19 exd5 ♕xc3 ∓) 17...♗xc6 18 ♘d2 d5 19 ♕e2 ♖ac8 20 ♗b1 (20 exd5 ♗xd5 21 ♗b1 e4 22

♘xe4 ♗xe4 23 ♗xe4 ♗xb4 24 cxb4 ♖xe4 25 ♕f1 ♕b7 ∓ Rachels-Al.Ivanov, USA 1989) 20...♕b7 21 exd5 ♗xd5 22 ♘e4 ♖cd8 =.

b) After 15 dxc6 ♗xc6 16 b4 ♘c4! 17 ♘xc4 bxc4 18 ♘d2 d5 19 exd5 ♗xd5 20 ♕e2 ♖ac8, Black was at least equal in Leroy-Yarovik, corr. 1999.

15...cxd5

Black isn't losing after 15...♘xd5?! 16 ♕h5 ♗xh4 17 ♕xh4 ♕e7 (17...♘e7?! 18 b4 ♘c4 19 ♘xc4 bxc4 20 ♗xc4 ±) 18 ♕g3 ♘f4 19 b4 ♘c4 20 ♘xc4 bxc4 21 ♗xc4, but he definitely hasn't improved his chances.

16 exd5

16 axb5 axb5 17 ♘f5 ♕d7 18 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 19 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 20 exd5 ♕b7 21 ♕f3 ♘xd5 ∓ Tseshkovsky-Psakhis, Erevan Z 1982.

16...♘c4 17 ♘f5

17 axb5 ♘xa3 18 bxa3 axb5 is given as equal in *NCO*, but after 19 ♘f5 ♗d8! (19...♗c8 20 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 21 c4 bxc4 22 ♗xc4 ♗a6 leads to equality, B.Ivanović-Smejkal, Sarajevo 1983) 20 ♕d3 ♗c8 21 ♘g3 ♗d7, the computers substantially prefer Black, which we believe is a more accurate evaluation. His position is very harmonious while White's pawn-structure is wrecked.

17...♗xd5

17...♘xa3 18 bxa3 is actually not so clear. White's activity compensates for his structural flaws.

18 axb5 axb5 19 ♘xb5 ♕d7

According to Parma, 19...♕c6 ∓ is simpler.

20 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7 21 b3 ♖xa2!

For his exchange sacrifice, Black gets one pawn, superior piece activity and pressure on White's weak c3-pawn. Just as importantly, his remaining pawn-structure is very compact – considerably reducing the risk if in the long run White becomes active.

Conclusion:

The knight development to a3 is extremely rare and it is so for a reason. If Black is alert, White shouldn't succeed in isolating the b5-pawn and the knight risks being stranded on the rim.

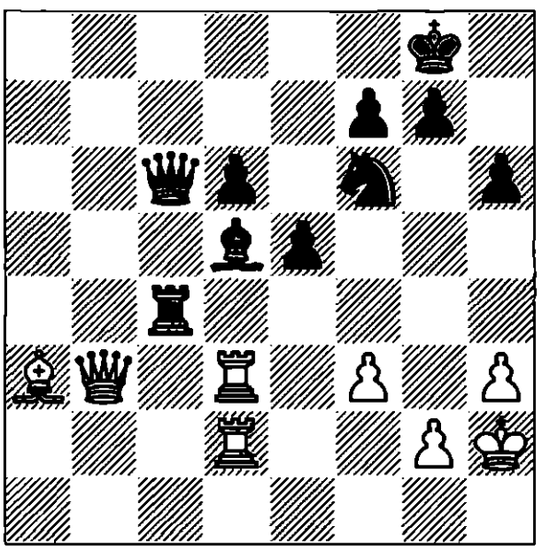
Illustrative Game 11

Ljubojević – Karpov
Lucerne OL 1982

22 ♖xa2 ♕xb5 23 bxc4 ♕xc4

The computers are slightly inclined to prefer Black, which is a good omen.

24 ♖d2 ♕xc3 25 ♖e3 ♕c6 26 ♖ed3 ♖c7 27 ♗b2 ♕b6 28 ♔h2 ♖c4 29 ♗a3 ♕a6 30 ♕b3 ♕c6 31 f3 *(D)*



Black's position looks somewhat strained but he demonstrates the basic solidity of his position with a pawn sacrifice.

31...e4 32 fxe4 ♗e6 33 ♖xd6 ♕xe4 34 ♖d8+ ♔h7 35 ♕d3 ♕xd3 36 ♖2xd3 ♖c2 37 ♖d2 ♖xd2 38 ♖xd2 ♘d5

From now on remarkably little happens. However, there is not much White can hope to achieve with all the pawns on one side and no visible weaknesses in Black's position.

39 ♖e2 ♘f4 40 ♖e4 ♘d5 41 ♖e5 ♘b6 42 ♗b4 ♘d5 43 ♗c5 ♘f4 44 ♗d4 ♘d5 45 ♔g3 ♘e7 46 ♗c5 ♘f5+ 47 ♔f2 h5 48 ♗b4 ♔g6 49 ♗c3 ♗d7 50 ♖c5 f6 51 ♔f3 ♗e6 52 ♗e1 ♗b3 53 ♔e4 ♘d6+ 54 ♔f4 ♘f7 55 ♗f2 ♘g5 56 ♖a5 ♗c4 57 ♗e3 ♗f1 58 ♔g3 ♘e6 59 ♖a1 ♗d3 60 ♔h4 ♗e4 61 ♖a2 ♗d5 62 ♖c2 ♗b7 63 ♖b2 ♗d5 64 ♖b6 ♔f7 65 ♔g3 ♗e4 66 ♖a6 ♗d3 67 ♖a5 ♔g6 68 ♔f3 ♗f1 69 ♖d5 ♗c4 70 ♖d6 ♔f5 71 ♖d7 ♗b3 72 ♗a7 ♗c4 ½-½

4 Imperfection

The key to perfection: repetition, repetition, repetition. It's not fun. It's really boring.
PETER VIDMAR

It is no great secret that absolute perfection is boring. It was well known to the beautiful ladies of former epochs who carefully painted a 'beauty spot' on their naturally spotless faces. However, if you are very young or very naïve, you may still dream about playing 'the perfect game of chess'. As a special service for you, we shall disclose the secret here. The perfect game goes like this: 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘g5 ♖f8 12 ♘f3 ♖e8 13 ♘g5 ♖f8 14 ♘f3 ½-½.

Admittedly this is only one of an immense number of perfect games, ending in a draw without either player having made a losing error. Still, this sequence has already been played hundreds of times and it probably is the most frequently played 'grandmaster draw'. In the 1980s many grandmasters used it as an easy way to draw against Anatoly Karpov. That was no big problem for him, as his score with White was usually sufficient to win the tournament with mainly draws as Black. Nevertheless it provoked Plaskett to announce in his book *Playing to Win* that: "..if this is the methods a world champion has to employ, is his game worth playing?". We cannot really agree with Plaskett in this criticism. Even a world champion cannot be expected to change the nature of the game of chess. There are of course situations where Black has to play for a win, but this is always dictated by external factors, like the tournament situation, the relative ratings of the players or possibly their ambitions.

However, even if the Zaitsev repetition is perfectly played, it is of little or no theoretical interest. From a theoretical point of view it is clear that Black has won the duel; in chess the creative and aggressive obligations are firmly placed on White.

In this chapter, we shall have a look at various ways to avoid perfection. Here is our advice in some of the realistic scenarios:

1) *A draw must be avoided at any cost:*

Play 1...c5!

2) *A draw is acceptable but you would prefer a full game:*

Play 9...♖e8, and if White replies 10 ♘g5, avoid the repetition after 10...♖f8 11 ♘f3 with 11...♕d7 (Chapter 5). If he replies 10 d4, you can choose between the slightly risky 10...♗f8 (Line 4D) and the normal 10...♗b7, allowing the (relatively unlikely) repetition after 11 ♘g5 ♖f8 12 ♘f3 ♖e8 13 ♘g5. Quite often you will find that White was only testing you, and avoids the repetition himself.

3) *A draw seemed acceptable when you started the game, but White's cowardly (9...♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8) 11 ♘g5 ♖f8 12 ♘f3 provokes you to play on:*

Play 12...♕d7; accept that White will be better for the next few moves and beat him in a long game.

Positive Thinking

Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.
GROUCHO MARX

It seems that most Zaitsev players consider the repetition only as an annoying extra option for White. To balance the picture we would like to point out that Black too can find something positive here.

Firstly, if you happen to lose the game, it may somewhat soften the pain if you are able to say that 'I played too hard for the win with Black by avoiding a repetition'.

Secondly, there is a certain psychological effect in the act of declining a repetition with the black pieces, in effect telling your opponent he isn't strong enough to deserve a quick draw with White. You will be surprised how many of

your opponents are eager to tell you after the game that they weren't really going to take a threefold repetition.

Finally there is the matter of time. As we have already demonstrated in Chapter 1, many theoretical main lines in the Zaitsev are very unbalanced. We believe quite a few of them are very promising for Black if he plays them accurately – the problem is that a seemingly small slip will frequently allow White to initiate a devastating attack against Black's king. It is easier to play well if you have plenty of thinking time in a position you know well. The Closed Ruy Lopez is the ideal opening for perfectionists and time-pressure addicts. Usually you will complete your first twelve moves or so in less than a minute. Then you may have to dig somewhat deeper into your memory bank to recollect the theoretical moves, but you will often find that you have completed your first 20 moves before you have to do any deep thinking. That should leave you with plenty of time to reach the time-control from a hopefully familiar position.

Repeating the position also brings the game closer to the time-control, which is welcome for time-trouble addicts. After 9 h3 ♖e8 10 ♘g5 ♖f8 11 ♘f3 ♖e8 12 d4 ♗b7 13 ♘g5 ♖f8 14 ♘f3 ♖e8 15 ♘bd2 ♗f8 16 a4 h6 17 ♗c2 exd4 18 cxd4 ♘b4 19 ♗b1 c5 20 d5 ♘d7 21 ♖a3 f5 we have reached our standard main-line position but are well past the halfway-mark to forty moves. It is no wonder that the Closed Ruy Lopez has been the battleground for some of the best-played games in history!

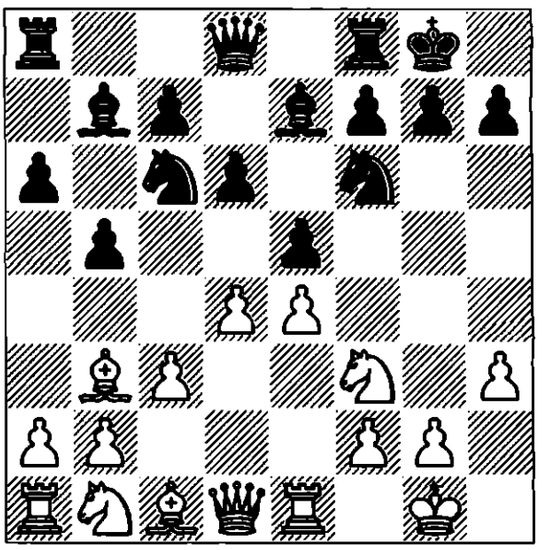
Repeating Ourselves

Repetition is the death of art.
ROBIN GREEN, *Northern Exposure*

If you mostly play tournaments where a lot of your opponents are considerably weaker than yourself (a sure recipe for stagnation by the way), the Zaitsev may not be the ideal weapon with Black. If you cannot happily accept the repetition of moves, you will have to compromise, but in our opinion that is what you also do if you meet 1 e4 with 1...g6 or 1...♘f6 in order to sharpen the fight.

Fortunately Black has some ways to continue the fight. They are perhaps not optimal solutions but will allow you to play for a win against clearly inferior opposition.

B



This position may look very similar to the one we have discussed in Chapter 1 after 10 d4. Actually though, this is a rare example where a diagram doesn't give the whole picture. In reality this is the position after the additional moves 10...♖e8 11 ♘g5 ♖f8 12 ♘f3.

In his thought-provoking book *Chess for Zebras*, Jonathan Rowson has this to say about the practical differences: "This is a difficult moment for Black! If he plays 12...♖e8, as he probably wants to, he allows White to force a draw with 13 ♘g5 ♖f8 and then 14 ♘f3 is already a threefold repetition before Black has time to deviate. For White the situation is completely different! He can flick in the first ♘g5 with absolutely no intention of taking the draw but perhaps with a reasonable chance that Black will deviate in order to avoid a draw."

Here is a short, but not exhaustive, overview of the alternatives (following 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘g5 ♖f8 12 ♘f3) if Black really needs to avoid a short draw:

a) 12...exd4 13 cxd4 ♘a5 14 ♗c2 c5 is probably playable but gives White a very nice pawn-centre and looks clearly inferior to the Zaitsev lines we examined in Chapter 1, where Black's knight was on b4.

b) Even 12...♘b8?! was played in the 1960s by as strong a player as Korchnoi, as Black doesn't lose a pawn after 13 dxe5 dxe5 14 ♕xd8 ♗xd8 due to his threats to e4.

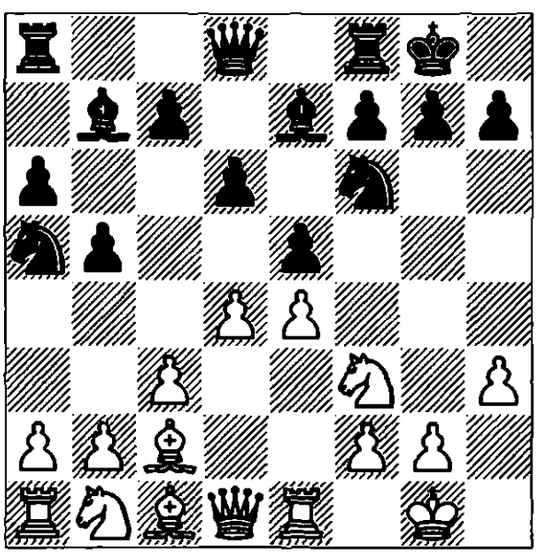
c) 12...♘d7 is a playable transposition to the Karpov Variation, but is probably somewhat inferior to the original as here White can

complete the typical ♘bd2-f1 manoeuvre (which he doesn't have time for in the main line of that variation as Black attacks d4 one move earlier).

d) 12...h6 transposes to the Smyslov line 9...h6 10 d4 ♗b7!?, which is considerably less popular than 10...♖e8. However, as the 10...♖e8 line generally continues 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 ♘f1 and now either 12...♗b7 or 12...♗d7, transpositional possibilities are many.

e) 12...♘a5 is quite possibly Black's objectively best way to play on. For a flexible player it may be the best reason to prefer the 9...♗b7 move-order over 9...♖e8. After 13 ♗c2 *(D)* there is a choice:

B



e1) 13...c5 transposes to the relatively rare Romanishin Variation of the Chigorin (*9...♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4 ♗b7*). This is demanding but fully playable. However, this line is part of the enormous Chigorin complex and not considered in any depth in this book.

e2) 13...♘c4!? 14 b3 ♘b6 is a quiet alternative which gives White his normal small plus but allows Black to play on; e.g., 15 ♘bd2 ♖e8 and now:

e21) 16 a4 ♗f8 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♗b2 ♖xa1 19 ♕xa1 ♘bd7 20 ♗d3 ± Geller-Hennings, Havana 1971.

e22) 16 ♘f1 ♗f8 17 ♘g3 g6 18 ♗g5 (18 ♗b2 ♗h6 19 c4 ♘bd7 20 c5 exd4 21 cxd6 cxd6 22 ♘xd4 ♖c8 23 ♕d3 ♘e5 ∓ Gullaksen-Ahlander, Gothenburg 2001) 18...h6 19 ♗d2 ♗g7 20 ♖c1 ± Borriss-Ahlander, Rethymnon ECC 2003.

All these moves lead to positions either identical to or strongly reminiscent of those you must expect White to have prepared for at move nine. Unfortunately, where there are differences, they seem to be somewhat in White's favour.

Our recommendation is the sixth option, 12...♕d7!? which is closely related to the 9...♕d7 line we explore in Chapter 5. We believe this is quite an acceptable alternative and shall have a closer look at that move in Line 4C.

Move-Numbering

Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.
ALBERT EINSTEIN

As the repetitions we have been discussing here add either two or four moves to the move numbering, we have taken the liberty of standardizing the move-numbers throughout this book. We have included these moves and kept the actual move-numbers intact only in those cases where we are specifically discussing the repetition. We believe this avoids a lot of confusion, even if the repetition in the games actually impacted the player's decisions. We apologize to those who feel they have had their games mangled.

Chapter Guide

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 (9...♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8)

Line 4A: 11 ♘g5 ♖f8 (12 f4!?) 109
Line 4B: 11 ♘g5 ♖f8 12 ♕d3!? 111
Line 4C: 10...♕d7 112
Line 4D: 9...♖e8 (10 d4 ♗f8!?) 114

4A: Zaitsev: 10...♖e8 11 ♘g5 and 12 f4

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8)

11 ♘g5 ♖f8 12 f4!?

This charge (or possibly 12 ♘f3 ♖e8 13 ♘g5 ♖f8 14 f4) must be the most logical continuation if White isn't looking for a draw.

12 ♕d3!? is covered in Line 4B.

Other alternatives are harmless:

a) 12 dxe5 ♘xe5 13 f4 ♘c4 14 ♗c2 d5 15 b3 ♘b6 16 e5 ♘e4 17 ♘xe4 dxe4 18 ♘d2 ♗c5+ 19 ♔h2 ♗f2 20 ♖e2 e3 21 ♘f1 ♕h4 and

Black was much better in Sax-Lukacs, Budapest 1981.

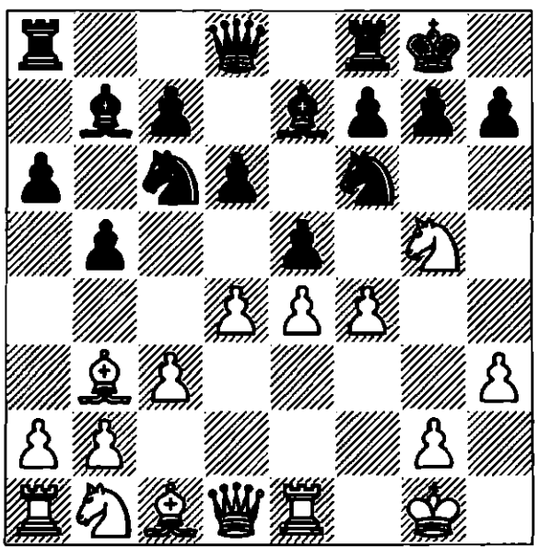
b) 12 a4 h6 13 ♘f3 ♖e8 and now:

b1) 14 ♘bd2 ♗f8 transposes to the main-line Zaitsev, considered in Chapters 1 and 2.

b2) 14 ♕d3 exd4 15 cxd4 ♘b4 16 ♕c3 c5 17 ♘bd2 ♗f8 18 e5 ♘fd5 19 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 20 ♕d3 ♘b4 21 ♕c3 dxe5 22 dxc5 ♘d3 23 ♖e3 e4 ∓ Yacob-Daurelle, French Cht 2002.

b3) 14 d5 ♘a5 15 ♗a2 (15 ♗c2 c6 is similar) 15...c6 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 with typical play where Black has no problems.

We now return to 12 f4 *(D)*:


B

12...exf4

This undermines the knight's support and is the tried and tested solution. 12...exd4!? is less explored but may be just as good:

a) 13 e5 dxe5 14 fxe5 ♘d5 15 ♕h5 ♗xg5 16 ♗xg5 ♕d7 ∓ Garcia Garcia-Perez Candelario, Andorra 2004.

b) 13 cxd4 d5 14 e5 ♘e4! and then:

b1) 15 ♘c3 ♘xd4! 16 ♘xd5 (16 ♕xd4 ♗c5 17 ♖xe4 ♗xd4+ 18 ♖xd4 c5 ∓) 16...♘xb3 17 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 18 ♕xb3 ♘xg5 19 fxg5 ♖ad8 ∓ A.Martin-Dutreeuw, London 1989.

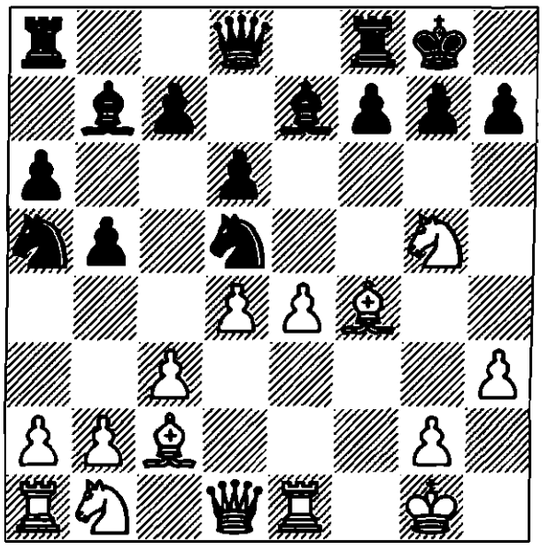
b2) 15 ♘xe4 dxe4 16 ♖xe4 ♘a5 and Black has at least compensation for the pawn.

13 ♗xf4 ♘a5

This drives the light-squared bishop off the a2-g8 diagonal and must be the first step in Black's defensive scheme.

14 ♗c2 ♘d5! *(D)*

This finesse takes advantage of the fact that White's aggressive stallion is insufficiently supported and ensures that he isn't allowed any tactical shot with it.


W

15 exd5

The aggressive alternatives lead nowhere:

a) 15 ♕h5 h6 16 exd5 ♗xg5 – *15 exd5 ♗xg5 16 ♕h5 h6.*

b) 15 ♘xh7 ♘xf4 16 ♘xf8 ♕xf8 17 ♖f1 g5 18 ♘d2 ♕g7 19 a4 ♘c4 20 ♘xc4 bxc4 21 ♖f2 ♕g6 was at least equal from Black's perspective in Rajna-Zaitsev, Szolnok 1975.

15...♗xg5 16 ♕h5 h6 17 ♘d2!?

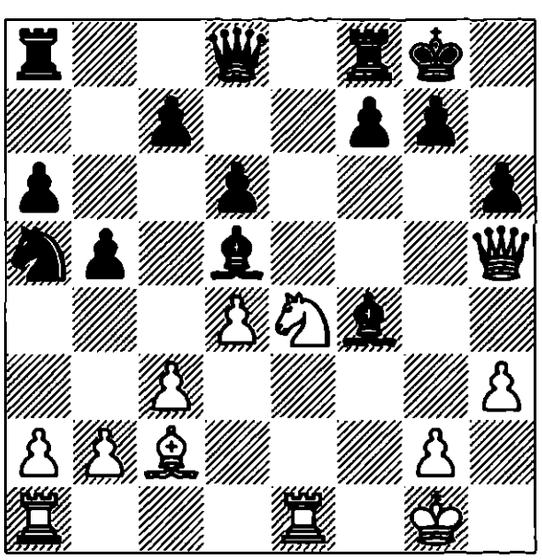
The f4-bishop is indirectly protected by the double attack ♕f5, which threatens mate on h7.

17 ♗g3 is relatively harmless: 17...g6 18 ♕f3 ♘c4 19 ♘a3 ♘b6 20 ♗b3 h5 21 ♘c2 ♕f6 (21...♕d7!?) 22 ♕e4 a5 = Ljubojević-Gligorić, Belgrade 1979.

17...♗xd5 18 ♘e4

Now the tactics become more complicated.

18...♗xf4 *(D)*


W

19 ♕f5!

To secure any compensation, White must ensure that he gets the dark-squared bishop. After 19 ♕xd5 g6 Black is instantly better.

19...g6 20 ♘f6+

After 20 ♕xf4 ♔g7, White does not have sufficient compensation for the pawn deficit.

20...♔g7 21 ♘h5+ ♔h8!?

An ambitious attempt to keep the game going. 21...gxh5 leads to an immediate draw: 22 ♕h7+ ♔f6 23 ♕f5+ ♔g7 =.

22 ♕xf4 ♕g5 23 ♕xg5 hxg5 24 ♘f6 ♗e6 25 g4 ♔g7

This is Romanishin and Bykhovsky's suggested improvement over 25...d5 26 ♖e5 ♘c4 27 ♖xg5 ♔g7! 28 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 29 ♖xd5 ♘e3 30 ♖e5 ♘xc2 31 ♖c1 ♘xd4 ½-½ Glek-Khalifman, Tashkent 1987.

26 ♘e4 ♖ae8 27 ♘xg5 ♗d5 28 b3

Black can also generate a queenside initiative after 28 ♔f2 ♖h8; e.g., 29 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 30 a4 ♘c4 31 axb5 axb5 32 b3 ♘d2 33 b4 f6 ∓.

28...♖h8 29 ♔h2 ♘c6 30 ♗d3 f6 31 ♗e4 ♗xe4 32 ♘xe4 b4

Black is better, as White must give up the e5-square to Black's knight.

Conclusion:

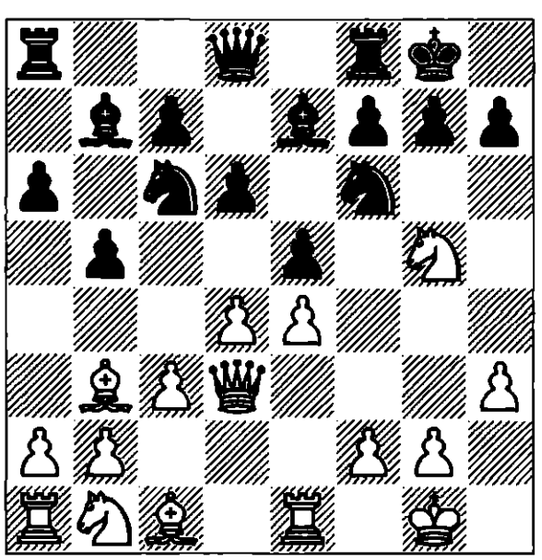
This line is complicated, but current theory assesses it as very satisfactory for Black and we would be surprised if this evaluation changes.

4B: Zaitsev: 10...♖e8 11 ♘g5 and 12 ♕d3

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘g5 ♖f8)

12 ♕d3!? *(D)*

B



This doesn't appear natural but is one of White's very few independent tries.

12...h6 13 ♘f3 ♖e8

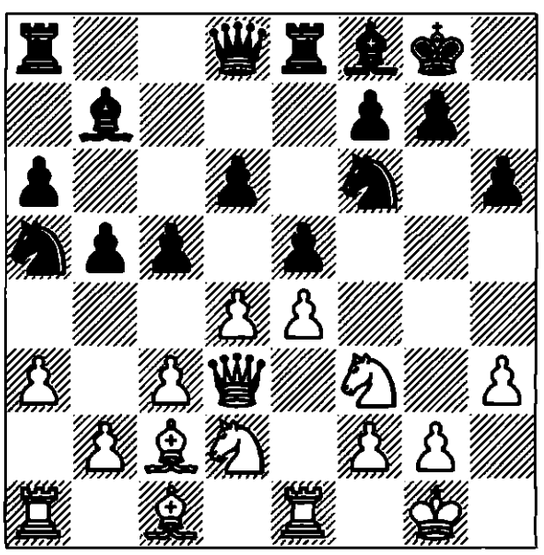
13...exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 might look tempting, but is too optimistic: 15 ♕e2 ♗xe4 (not 15...♘xe4? 16 a3) 16 ♘c3 ♗xf3 (even worse is 16...d5 17 ♘e5!) 17 ♕xf3 c5 and now 18 a3!, after which White is better; e.g., 18...c4 19 axb4 cxb3 20 ♕b7 ♖e8 21 ♖xa6 ♖xa6 22 ♕xa6 ±.

14 ♘bd2 ♗f8 15 a3 ♘a5

This is by no means forced, but is a reasonable way to take advantage of the artificial deployment of White's queen.

16 ♗c2 c5 *(D)*

W



This looks quite Chigorin-like, but White's queen isn't optimally placed.

17 b4 c4 18 ♕f1

This is relatively the best square for the queen at the moment, as on the e-file it would feel uncomfortable opposing the e8-rook.

18...♘c6 19 d5 ♘e7 20 a4 g6 21 ♘h2 ♘h5 22 ♘df3 ♗g7

Black has good counterplay.

Conclusion:

We would be very surprised if 12 ♕d3 proves a real challenge for Black. It is quite artificial, to put it mildly.

Illustrative Game 12

Yurtaev – Timoshchenko

Tashkent 1987

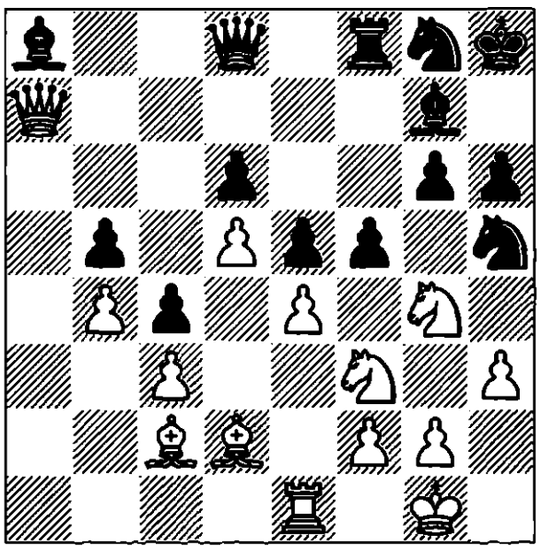
23 ♘g4 ♔h7 24 ♕e2 ♖f8 25 ♕e3 ♘g8

At this point Black's position looks quite promising, and both 25...f5!? and 25...♘f4!?

could be improvements as it seems Black tactically defends the h6-pawn in both cases.

26 ♗d2 ♔h8 27 axb5 axb5 28 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 29 ♕a7 f5 *(D)*

W



It would take a deep investigation to call this position anything but unclear.

30 exf5 ♗xd5

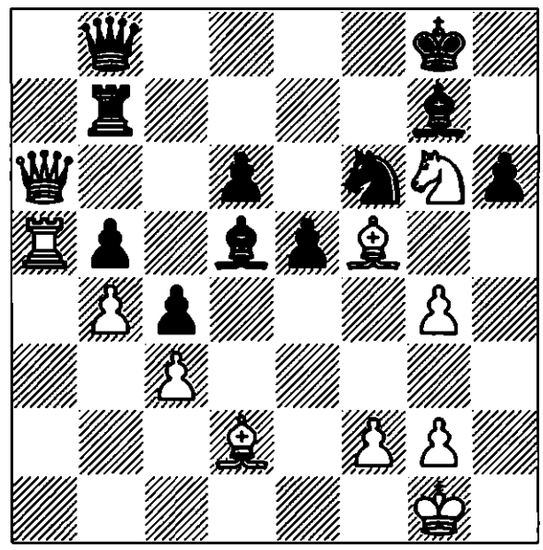
30...gxf5 31 ♘e3 would be slightly embarrassing for Black, as neither 31...e4 32 ♘d4 nor 31...f4 32 ♘f5 is convincing.

31 f6 ♘gxf6 32 ♘h4 ♖f7 33 ♘xg6+ ♔g8 34 ♕a6 ♕b8 35 ♖a1

White has succeeded in taking the play to the queenside.

35...♘xg4 36 hxg4 ♘f6 37 ♖a5 ♖b7 38 ♗f5 *(D)*

B



By now it is definitely clear that White has managed to consolidate a positional advantage.

38...♖b6 39 ♕a7 ♕xa7 40 ♖xa7 ♖b7 41 ♖a6 ♘e8 42 ♖a8 ♔f7 43 ♘h4 ♘f6 44 ♖a6 ♗e6?!

44...♘e8 would at least have put up a tougher fight.

45 f3 ♗xf5?!

This is total breakdown in a probably lost position.

46 ♘xf5 ♘e8 47 ♖xd6 ♖a7 48 ♖b6 ♖a2 49 ♗xh6 ♗h8 50 g5 1-0

4C: Zaitsev: 10...♕d7

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4)

10...♕d7!?

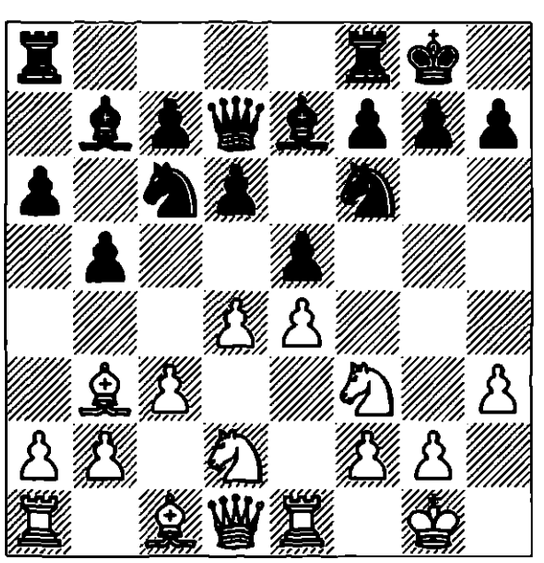
Is this still the Zaitsev Variation? We cannot give a definitive answer; nomenclature in chess isn't an exact science. However, as the position most frequently arises after the 'Zaitsev repetition' 10...♖e8 11 ♘g5 ♖f8 12 ♘f3, we tend to think so.

Whatever you choose to call it, this position is obviously related to the 9...♕d7 line we consider in Chapter 5. Although the queen move appears more natural at this point, where it doesn't block the light-squared bishop, it may actually be a slightly inferior version, as it allows White to play his queen's knight to f1 with no preparation.

11 ♘bd2 *(D)*

11 ♗g5 h6 12 ♗h4 ♖ae8 13 ♘bd2 ♗d8 14 d5 ♘a5 15 ♗c2 c6 16 b4 ♘c4 17 ♘xc4 bxc4 18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19 ♗a4 ♕c7 20 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 21 dxc6 ♕xc6 22 ♕e2 was slightly better for White in Kengis-Svidler, Gausdal 1991 as 22...d5 could be met coolly by 23 ♖ad1.

B



11...♖ae8!?

This contains the idea of redeploying the bishop after ...♗d8, ...c6 and ...♗b6. The more

orthodox 11...♖ad8 is, however, fully playable too:

a) After 12 d5, the game Gutierrez Castillo-Geller, Bogota 1978 proved very instructive: 12...♘b8 13 ♘f1 c6 14 dxc6 ♗xc6 15 ♘g3 ♕b7 16 ♕e2 ♘bd7 17 ♗c2 ♖fe8 18 ♘f5 ♗f8 19 ♘h2 d5 ∓. Note how Geller skilfully coordinated his forces.

b) 12 ♘f1 exd4 13 cxd4 d5 14 e5 ♘e4 15 ♘g3 ♘a5 16 ♗c2 c5 17 ♘xe4 dxe4 18 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 19 ♖xe4 ♘c6 and Black had enough compensation for the pawn deficit in Staniszewski-Pinski, Polanica Zdroj 1999.

c) 12 a3 ♕c8 13 ♗c2 ♖fe8 14 ♘f1 ♘b8 15 ♘g3 ♘bd7 16 a4 ♗f8 17 ♕e2 c6 led to a position resembling the Breyer Variation in Blehm-Pinski, Trzbinia 1999. White is slightly better and has various plans at his disposal.

12 ♘f1 *(D)*

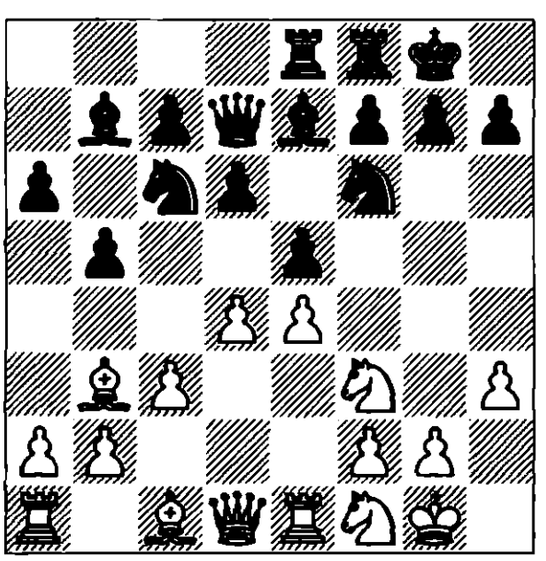
OK, so this is a minor triumph for White. But how serious can it really be to allow White to play ♘f1? After all, it's hard to control what White is doing on his own back rows. Furthermore, as we shall see, it may be possible for Black, by completely changing his plans, to demonstrate that White's slow manoeuvre has a downside too.

The alternatives appear less logical:

a) 12 a4 ♗d8 13 ♗c2 ♔h8 14 d5 ♘e7 15 axb5 axb5 16 b3 c6 17 c4 ♗b6 18 ♘f1 ♖a8 = Miulescu-Gaspariants, Paris 1993.

b) 12 ♗c2 ♗d8!? 13 a3 ♘b8 14 b4 ♕c8 15 ♗b2 c6 (15...♘bd7!?) 16 dxe5 dxe5 17 c4 ♗c7 18 ♗b3 ♘bd7 19 ♖c1 ± Kuzmin-Glauser, Bath Echt 1973.

B



12...exd4

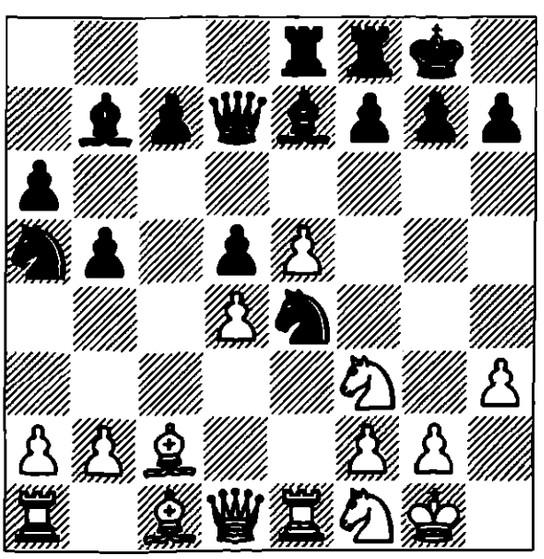
We would really like to make 12...♗d8!? work, but after the natural 13 ♘g3 h6 14 ♗c2 it turned out that Black had problems finding an active plan in Karpov-I.Zaitsev, USSR Ch (Riga) 1970: 14...♔h8 15 b3 ♘g8 16 d5 ♘ce7 17 c4 c6 18 dxc6 ♕xc6 19 cxb5 axb5 20 b4 ♗b6 21 ♗d3 d5 22 ♗b2 ♘g6 23 exd5 ♕xd5 24 ♗e4, when White's advantage was already close to decisive. As an aside, this seems to have been the first Ruy Lopez game between Karpov and his future second, Igor Zaitsev – roughly five years before Zaitsev had worked out his patent line.

13 cxd4 ♘a5 14 ♗c2 d5!

This completely changes the character of the game. That may not be desirable if you hope to utilize your deep understanding of the typical Closed Ruy Lopez positions, but objectively we believe it will give Black an excellent game.

15 e5 ♘e4 *(D)*

W



This demonstrates another point of placing the rooks on the e- and f-files. Now the knight can be supported by the f-pawn in Open Ruy Lopez style. Black's tempo-loss ...d6-d5 is more than compensated by White spending two moves to get his knight to the largely irrelevant (versus this set-up) f1-square. It could be useful to compare this position with the one we discuss in Line 5A. Our impression is that the differences are generally in Black's favour. The computers are already leaning towards Black in this position, which may not prove much but obviously is a good omen.

16 ♘e3

If White hopes to make sense of his knight manoeuvre, this is how he must play.

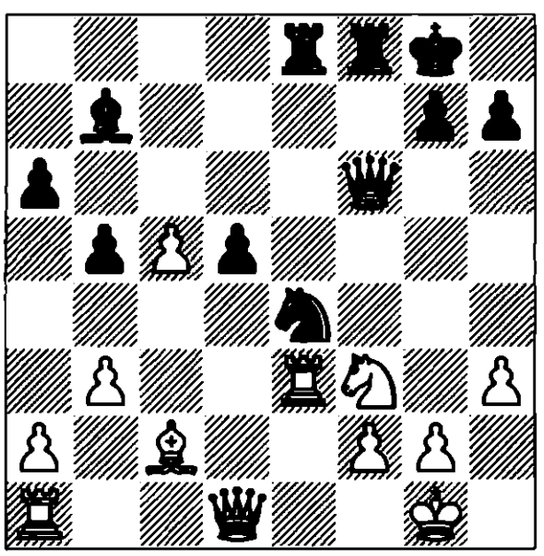
White's play in Dzhumaev-Svidler, Alma-Ata 1991 was extremely inconsistent: 16 ♘1d2 f5 17 exf6 ♗xf6 18 ♘f1 c5 19 dxc5 d4 20 ♗e3 ♖d8 21 ♗d2 ♘xd2 22 ♕xd2 d3 23 ♗xd3 ♗xf3 24 ♕xa5 ♗xg2 25 ♔xg2 ♕xd3 and White's ugly king position and disorganized pieces were far more important than his extra pawn.

16...f5 17 exf6 ♗xf6 18 ♘g4 ♕f5

18...♕d6 19 ♖e2 ♘c4 20 ♕e1 c5 21 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 22 dxc5 ♗c6 23 ♗e3 ♘xe3 24 fxe3 (or 24 ♖xe3 ♕xb2) 24...♘xc5 25 ♖c1 ♘d7 26 ♗b3 ♘b6 27 ♕c3 ♘c4 ½-½ Dimitrov-Svidler, Linares 1994.

19 ♗e3 ♘c4 20 b3 ♘xe3 21 ♖xe3 c5 22 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 23 dxc5 *(D)*

B



23...♘g5!?

This is our suggested improvement over Hawelko-Solozhenkin, Naleczow 1988, where Black chose 23...♘c3? which is rather difficult to comprehend. After 24 ♕d3 ♘e2+ 25 ♔h2 ♖e4 26 ♖e1 White was much better. Also note that the natural 23...♘xc5 24 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 25 ♕d4 leads to a rather uninspiring position for Black.

24 ♘xg5

Or 24 h4 ♘h3+! 25 gxh3 ♖xe3 26 fxe3 ♕xf3 ∓.

24...♕xf2+ 25 ♔h1 ♖xe3 26 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 27 ♕h5 ♖e1+ 28 ♖xe1 ♕xe1+ 29 ♔h2 ♕e5+ 30 ♔g1

Black must take the perpetual check.

Conclusion:

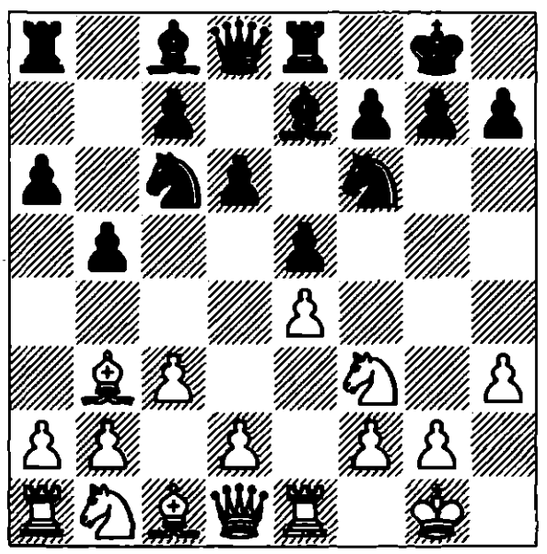
Black's strategic scheme of ...♖ae8, ...exd4, ...d5 and ...♘e4 followed by ...f5 is aggressive and appealing. Although our main line ends in a repetition, Black has the option of 18...♕d6 if he wishes to avoid this.

4D: Zaitsev: The 9...♖e8 Move-Order

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3)

9...♖e8 *(D)*

W



This is generally considered just an alternative path to the Zaitsev Variation, which indeed will arise after 10 d4 ♗b7. However, in certain respects it seems tempting for Black to complete his kingside regrouping before deciding how to arrange the rest of his army. Our main idea behind this move-order is, however, more refined. By allowing a repetition now, Black is probing for information about White's ambitions, so that he can decide how to avoid the draw while he still has all options open.

10 d4

White still does not disclose his intentions. With this move he might either he intending to head for main-line Zaitsev territory, or he might be planning to meet 10...♗b7 with 11 ♘g5.

The more direct 10 ♘g5!? forces, if White wishes, at least one repetition of moves. 10...♖f8 and then:

a) 11 f4?! exf4 12 d4 h6 13 ♘f3 ♘h5!? (13...♗b7) 14 ♗d5 ♗b7 15 a4 ♗h4 16 ♖f1 ♗g3 ∓.

b) If White reveals a desire for a quick draw with 11 ♘f3, Black must avoid 11...♖e8 if he wants to play on. Somewhat mysteriously, Flear recommends 11...♗b7 as a way to avoid the repetition. He does not give any advice about what to do after 12 d4 ♖e8 13 ♘g5. Neither does he mention the sequence *9...♗b7 10 d4*

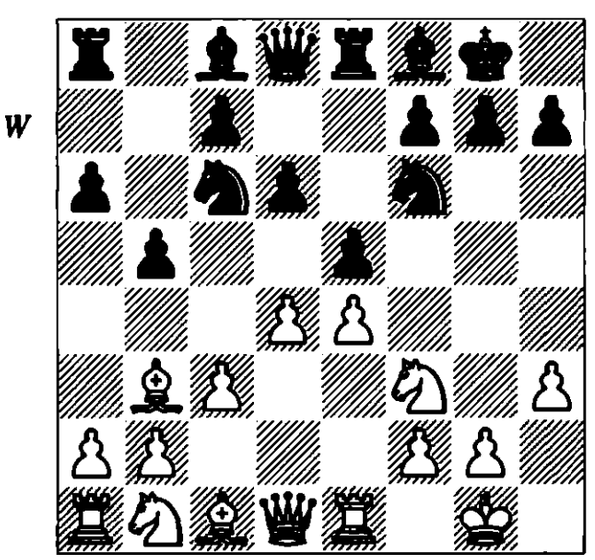
♖e8 11 ♘g5 ♖f8 12 ♘f3. However, from his comments to some Zaitsev games we can deduce that he must have had 13...♖f8 14 ♘f3 ♕d7 in mind. That position is the subject of our Line 4C.

Note that by using the 9...♖e8 move-order, Black has retained complete flexibility in his choice of lines and can now go for any one of the other main lines of the Closed Ruy Lopez without having committed his bishop to b7 (after *9...♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘g5 ♖f8 12 ♘f3*, the bishop move to b7 is a bit premature in the Breyer and the Chigorin, and also the Moscow Variation).

c) 11 d4 can be interpreted as an offer to transpose by 11...h6 12 ♘f3 to the Smyslov Variation – not at all an unreasonable proposal, as that is frequently Black's choice if he wants to avoid the Zaitsev repetition. Instead, 11...♗b7 transposes to Line 4A.

10...♗f8!? *(D)*

Instead, 10...♗b7 transposes to a standard Zaitsev.



This accelerated reorganization of the kingside is Black's independent idea in the 9...♖e8 Zaitsev. From now on Black will meet ♘g5 with ...♖e7.

11 ♗g5!? *(D)*

If White wants to demonstrate the drawbacks of Black's move-order, he will have to try this move. It may appear slightly non-standard but it is actually a typical reaction to an early ...♗f8. 11 ♘bd2 ♗b7! allows Black to reach the Zaitsev main line without allowing a repetition, while 11 ♘g5 ♖e7 gets White nowhere as usual.

11...♗b7

With this move, White simultaneously increases his influence over d5 and protects his a8-rook, thus reducing the impact of White's a4 break.

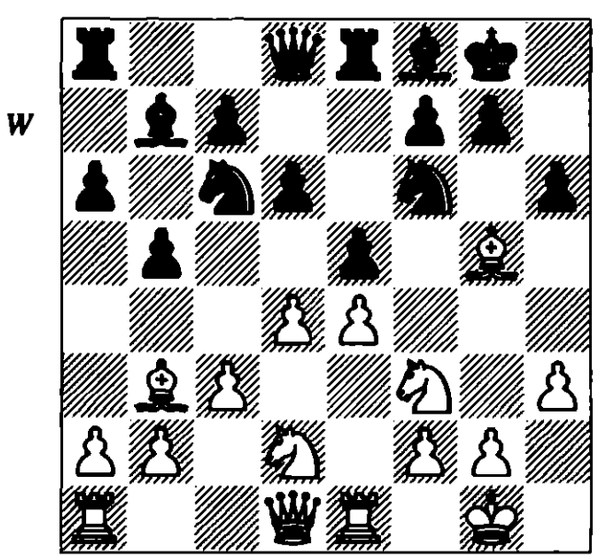
After the immediate 11...h6, Khalifman recommends 12 ♗xf6!? (12 ♗h4 ♗b7 13 ♘bd2 – *11...♗b7 12 ♘bd2 h6 13 ♗h4*) 12...♕xf6 13 a4 ♗b7 14 ♗d5, when Black has two options:

a) 14...b4!? might be worth looking further into, although after 15 ♕b3 followed by ♕c4 at an appropriate moment Black is a little bit tangled up.

b) 14...♖eb8 15 ♕d3 and here Khalifman concludes that White has a small advantage. That is quite possible but after the natural 15...exd4 it is not clear what White's best continuation is. 16 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 17 ♘xd4 ♗d7 cannot be a serious problem for Black, who has the bishop-pair, while 16 ♘xd4 ♘e5 17 ♕g3 c6! followed by a later ...c5 hardly inspires confidence for White either.

12 ♘bd2 h6 *(D)*

12...g6?! 13 d5! ♘b8 (13...♘a5 14 ♗c2 h6 15 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 16 b4 ♘c4 17 ♘xc4 bxc4 18 ♘d2 ± Khalifman) 14 c4 ♘bd7 15 ♖c1 ♘c5 16 ♗c2 h6 17 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 18 b4 ♘d7 19 cxb5 axb5 20 ♗d3 ± Khalifman.



13 ♗h4

13 ♗xf6 seems less tempting when White cannot apply immediate pressure on the queenside: 13...♕xf6 14 ♘f1 (14 a4? exd4 ∓) 14...♘a5 15 ♗c2 c5 looks very playable, but after 16 d5 ♘c4 17 a4!?, we recommend that Black chooses 17...♘b6 rather than 17...♘xb2 18 ♕b1 ♘c4 19 axb5 a5 as White will then end up with a strong knight on c4.

13...♘b8!?

Rather surprisingly, Khalifman only analyses 13...♗e7, which not only seems slightly inconsistent but also appears to be untested: 14 ♖c1 exd4 15 cxd4 ♘b4 16 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 17 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 18 ♕b3+ d5 19 ♕xb4 dxe4 20 ♘e5+ ♗xe5 21 dxe5 ♖xe5 22 ♘xe4 with a slight advantage for White.

14 ♗c2 ♘bd7 15 a4 c6!?

15...c5 16 dxe5 dxe5 17 b3 ♗c6 18 ♘h2 ♖e6 19 ♘hf1 ♕c7 20 ♘e3 ♕b7 21 c4 b4 22 ♘d5 is slightly better for White, Bronstein-Lukacs, Budapest 1977.

16 ♗d3 g6

Black hasn't equalized but he has got a solid and flexible position.

Conclusion:

White's independent ideas versus the 9...♖e8 move-order do not appear to pose a great threat. The big question therefore is whether Black is likely by his move-order to expose any potential repeaters (and if so, whether he is able to make use of his knowledge).

Regarding Black's independent idea of meeting 10 d4 with 10...♗f8, we can say that 11 ♗g5 gives White an advantage, but we are not convinced that it is greater than his normal 'birthright' plus. Overall, this looks like a good weapon if Black wants to avoid a short draw against a weaker opponent.

Illustrative Game 13

Anatsko – Bodnar
Lvov 1999

17 g4?!

This thrust is completely unmotivated and doesn't address the requirements of the position at all. More natural moves include 17 ♕c2 and 17 b4!?, in both cases with a small edge for White, reminiscent of the Breyer Variation.

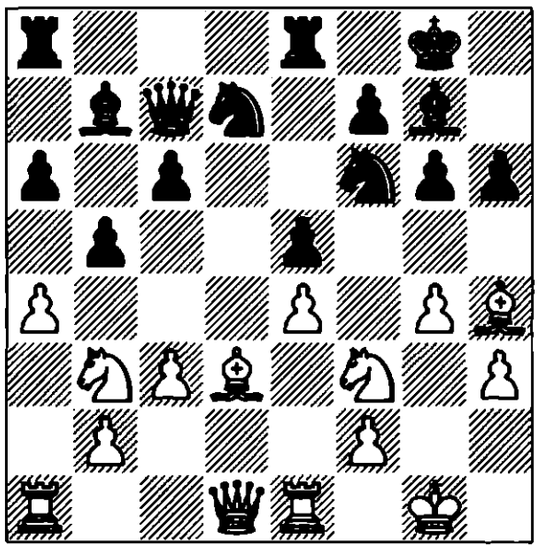
17...♗g7 18 dxe5 dxe5 19 ♘b3 ♕c7 *(D)*

Black has a small advantage. He can improve his position in several ways – one being to bring a knight to f4.

20 ♕e2 ♘h7 21 c4 bxa4 22 ♖xa4 c5 23 ♘a5 ♗c8 24 ♗c2 ♖b8 25 ♖a3 ♘hf8

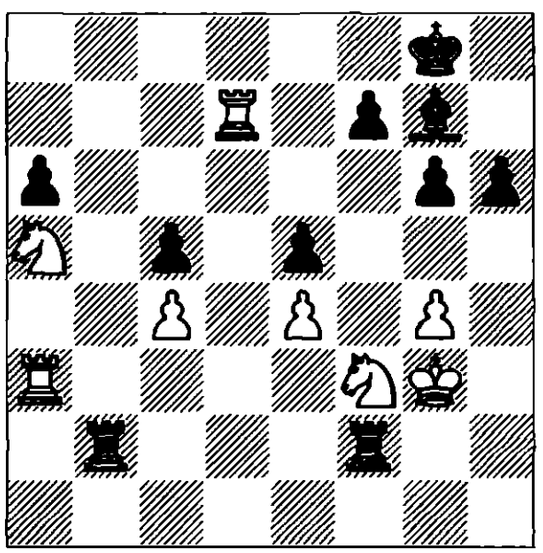
Why not take the offered b-pawn?

26 ♗a4 ♖e6 27 ♖d1 ♖eb6 28 ♕d3 ♘e6?



This is a totally unnecessary piece sacrifice. After 28...♗f6 Black can still hope to exploit White's weakened kingside.

29 ♗xd7 ♘f4 30 ♕d2 ♖xb2 31 ♕d6 ♕xd6 32 ♖xd6 ♘xh3+ 33 ♔h2 ♘xf2 34 ♗xf2 ♗xd7 35 ♖xd7 ♖xf2+ 36 ♔g3 ♖bb2 *(D)*



Black has got three pawns for the piece, but none of them are passed and his queenside pawns are likely to drop off very quickly.

37 ♘b3 ♗f6 38 ♖d2

38 ♘bd2 would have decided the game a lot quicker.

38...♖fxd2 39 ♘bxd2 ♗g5 40 ♘xg5 ♖xd2 41 ♘f3 ♖e2 42 ♖a5 ♖xe4 43 ♖xc5 f6 44 ♖c7 a5 45 c5

White's c-pawn should decide the game, but the result seems less obvious than it did a few moves ago.

45...♔f8 46 ♖a7 ♖c4 47 ♖xa5 ♖c3 48 ♔f2 h5 49 g5 e4 50 ♘d4 fxg5 51 c6 g4 52 c7 ♔e7 53 ♖e5+ ♔d7 54 ♘b5 ♖c2+ 55 ♔g3 e3 56 ♖xe3 ♖c5 57 ♖d3+ ♔e7 1-0

5 Regrouping System

I'm afraid of the dark, and suspicious of the light.
WOODY ALLEN

In this chapter we shall explore a relatively little-known system where Black aims to regroup his forces with ...♕d7, followed by a quick ...♖e8 and ...♗f8.

As the Zaitsev Variation is for most purposes a fully satisfactory opening system, this may be considered a bonus chapter. In particular it will be useful for those who play a lot of Open tournaments and worry about weaker players taking advantage of White's drawing line in the Zaitsev.

Theory is underdeveloped, and we mainly consider it a supporting line to the Zaitsev rather than a competing variation. However, like the Zaitsev this variation doesn't give the play as distinct a character as the Chigorin or the Breyer, and usually leads to 'normal-looking' Closed Ruy Lopez positions. For these reasons it will be an excellent main weapon for certain categories of players:

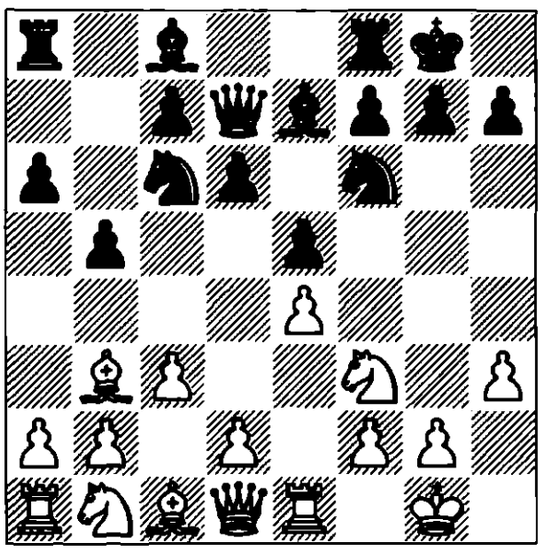
- Experienced Ruy Lopez players can utilize their general understanding of these positions without having to keep up with the latest developments in opening theory.
- New Ruy Lopez adherents can save a lot of memorization while still gaining experience which will be very relevant when they later graduate to a more recognized line.

In addition the many transpositional possibilities to and from the Zaitsev will expand the reader's options in that system by allowing him to add various ...♕d7 lines to his repertoire at a very low cost.

Regrouping System, Overview

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3)

9...♕d7!? *(D)*


W

This rare move may at first look clumsy, and indeed you shouldn't expect this to be an easy route to equality. Given that the queen is committed so early, chances are fair that White will find a set-up where it will prove less than ideally positioned. The queen is not necessarily better placed at d7 than at d8, and while the queen move provides the c6-knight with a useful square, it simultaneously takes away the d7-square from the knights.

That being said, the move has a lot going for it:

- Black prepares ...♘d8, which in certain positions can be an excellent transit-square for the knight (whether it is attacked by d5 or not).
- The simple fact that the move, like 9...♗b7, protects the c6-knight should not be underestimated. That means that after ...♖e8 and ...♗f8, the threats to e4 will be real, as ♗d5 will no longer be a decisive fork.
- Black can now play ...♖e8 without having to worry about ♘g5, which can now be countered rather comfortably with ...♘d8 and later either ...♘e6 or ...h6.
- There is barely any theory on this line, which forces your opponent to think for himself at an early stage rather than playing 20-30 book moves.
- It is considerably stronger than it looks, possibly making some opponents underestimate it.

9...♖e8 10 d4 ♕d7 leads to the same position. Some pros and cons of that move-order were discussed in Chapter 4.

10 d4

This is the only consistent move. For 10 a4 and the somewhat feeble alternative 10 d3, see Line 5E.

10...♖e8

Generally Black is now able to reorganize his camp quite comfortably. The immediate 10...♗b7 transposes directly to the Zaitsev Variation discussed in Line 4B. However, we consider that line to be slightly less accurate, as Black will be slower to attack e4 and he allows White to complete the knight manoeuvre to g3. Here we shall concentrate on lines where Black delays ...♗b7 for some moves, giving priority to reorganizing his kingside with ...♖e8 and ...♗f8. The light-squared bishop will then be deployed at b7, after which Black's position will look a lot more harmonious.

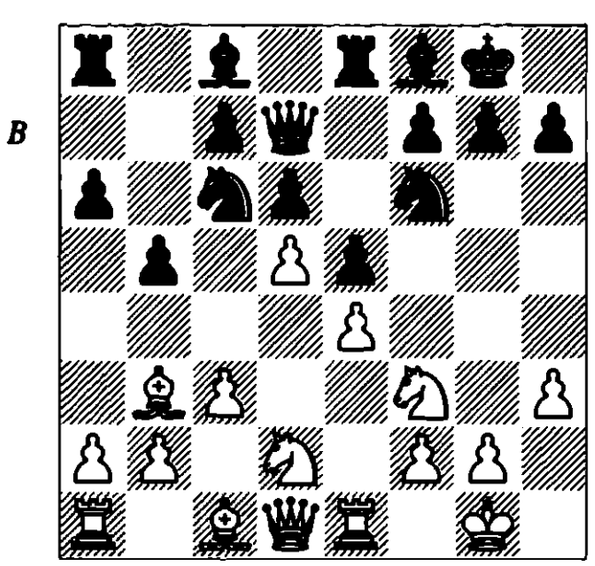
11 ♘bd2

This is the natural square for the queen's knight in the Closed Lopez. For alternatives, see Lines 5D and 5E.

11...♗f8

Now the bishop is out of the way, so that Black's rook can defend e5 and apply indirect pressure on the e4-pawn. From here it will usually later emerge at g7 with increased power. For 11...♗b7 see Line 4B.

12 d5 *(D)*



This is recommended and analysed at some length by Khalifman, and therefore is a line to prepare properly for. For alternatives, see Lines 5B and 5C.

12...♘d8!?

Somewhat surprisingly, this is almost untested. After all, this option was one of our initial reasons for moving the queen. Obviously the move cannot be refuted by tactical means, and in Line 5A we shall demonstrate that it has some positional points.

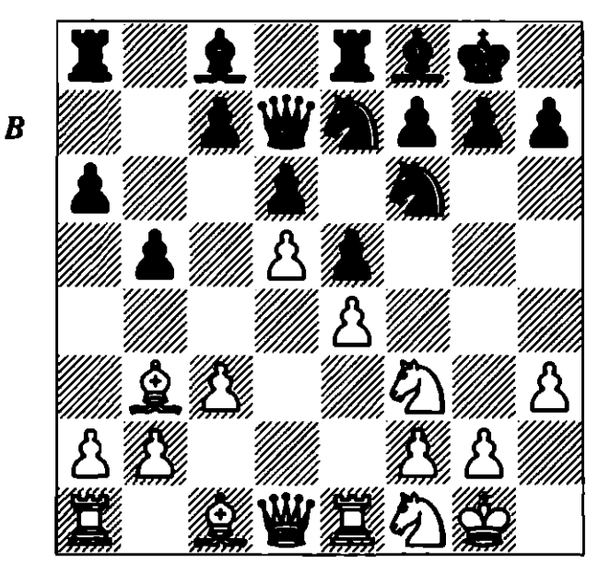
However, to appreciate the move's qualities, we have to take a look at the alternatives and the specific problems White can create against them:

a) 12...♘a5?! looks natural as Black gains a tempo on the b3-bishop. Unfortunately it turns out that the knight is not only in danger of ending up out of play but is also exposed as a target for White's queenside pawns. This may sound a little like the Chigorin Variation (9...♘a5) but is probably more serious here, as after 13 ♗c2 Black cannot, for tactical reasons, immediately establish a queenside presence with ...c6 or ...c5:

a1) 13...c5 14 b4 ♘b7 15 a4 ♖b8 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♕e2 g6 18 ♖a7 ±.

a2) 13...c6 14 b4 ♘b7 15 a4 cxd5 16 axb5 ♘xe4 17 ♘xe4 dxe4 18 ♖xe4 a5 19 c4 ♕c7 20 ♖h4 g6 21 ♘g5 ♗e7 22 ♕f3 ♗xg5 23 ♗xg5 f5 24 ♕c6 ♕f7 25 ♕b6 a4 26 c5 dxc5 27 bxc5 a3 28 c6 +– Khalifman.

b) 12...♘e7 has been theory's favourite for some years, but Khalifman's book seems to have rendered it close to unplayable. You will notice that insufficient protection of the e-pawn and the veiled attacks on f7 are major tactical elements in the following lines after 13 ♘f1 *(D)*:



b1) After 13...h6 14 ♘g3 c6 15 dxc6 ♕xc6 16 ♘h2!, both e5 and f7 prove vulnerable:

b11) 16...♘g6 17 ♘h5 was very difficult for Black in Kindermann-Gostiša, Ptuj 1995 as 17...♘xh5?! would have been met with 18 ♗d5 ±.

b12) 16...♖b8 17 ♘g4 ♘xg4 18 hxg4 ♗e6 19 ♗xe6 fxe6 20 g5 ♔h7 21 ♕f3 ±.

b13) 16...d5 17 ♘f3! ±.

b2) 13...g6 14 c4! ♗g7 15 c5! is very uncomfortable for Black, who risks having his position cut in two by a pawn on c6:

b21) 15...dxc5 16 ♘xe5 ♕d6 17 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 18 e5 ♕b6 19 ♗e3 ♘fxd5 20 ♗xd5+ ♘xd5 21 ♕xd5+ ♗e6 22 ♕f3+ ♔g8 23 b4! ±.

b22) 15...♘h5 16 c6! ♕d8 17 g4 ♘f4 18 ♗xf4 exf4 19 ♕d2 h6 20 e5! ± Khalifman.

b3) Probably Black must play 13...♘g6 14 ♘3h2 ♗b7 15 ♘g3 h6 in order to survive, but his position after 16 ♘g4 ♘xg4 17 hxg4 ♗e7 18 ♘f5 is fairly prospectless; e.g., 18...♗g5 19 ♗xg5 hxg5 20 ♕d2 f6 21 g3 ♘e7 22 ♘e3 ±.

Chapter Guide

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♕d7 (10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8)

Line 5A:	12 d5	119
Line 5B:	12 ♗c2	122
Line 5C:	(12 a3)	124
Line 5D:	11 ♗g5!?	127
Line 5E:	(10 d4 ♖e8 11 a4)	130

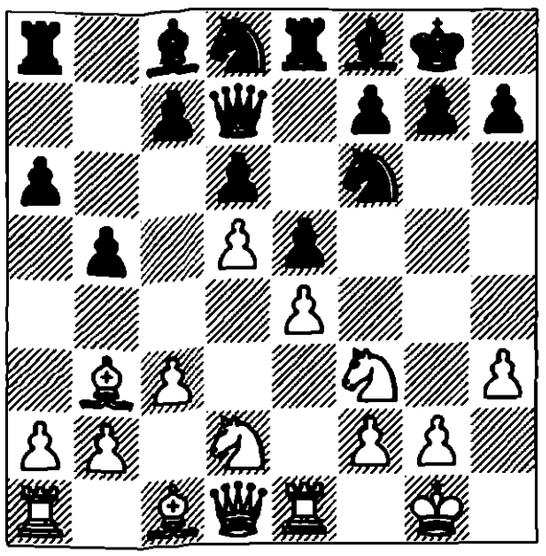
5A: Regrouping, Main Line

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♕d7)

10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 d5 ♘d8 *(D)*

Having seen the problems with 12...♘e7 and 12...♘a5, we shall now examine the almost untested 12...♘d8. We have no reason to believe that this move will solve all Black's problems in the Closed Ruy Lopez, but will try to prove that Black can get a fully playable position from which he can hold his own against stronger or equal opponents and outplay weaker ones.

Due to the almost total absence of practical tests, it's far from easy to identify the candidate moves. If you like, you could turn this into another exercise in the Silman/Dorfman analytical scheme. However, if you have worked your way through the book so far, we wouldn't expect you to discover anything really surprising about the king positions or the material balance. We



believe this sums up the essential positional factors:

White has made a slight concession in the centre by playing d5 at such an early stage. This was necessary to complete his development in a harmonious way, but also defines Black's strategic plan: he should immediately challenge White's d5-pawn with ...♗b7 and ...c6. This plan pursues two goals: firstly, after the exchange dxc6 ♗xc6 Black obtains a numerical advantage in the centre with two pawns versus one. This is the same argument that Black uses in the Sicilian Defence. Secondly, Black's light-squared bishop springs to life again on the long diagonal and in particular eyes the e4-pawn. After the inevitable exchange on c6, the battle normally revolves around the d5-square. If White can establish a piece there, it's normally a sign that things are going well for him. Black, on the other hand, dreams of achieving the pawn-break ...d5 under favourable circumstances.

13 a4

This looks very natural. We must, however, admit that part of our reason for making this the main line is that it may quite reasonably transpose to a line from the Zaitsev which has had a few tournament outings. It is hard to give a lot of lines after the untested alternatives:

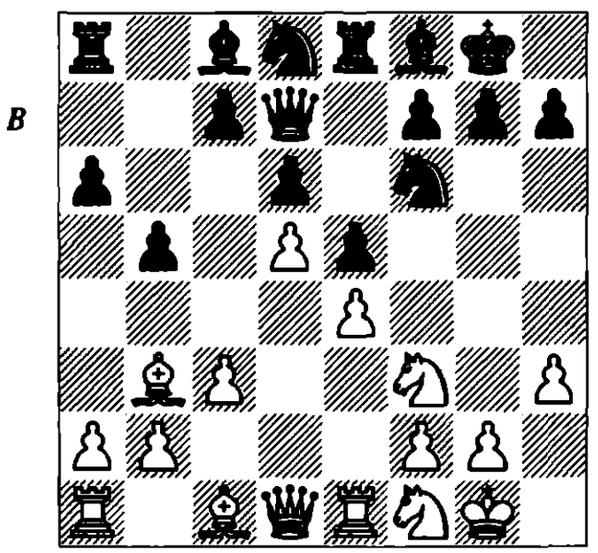
a) 13 ♘h4?! looks premature. White heads directly for f5, but decentralizes his knight. It seems more likely that f5 should be a target for the other knight.

b) 13 a3 must be playable but it looks a little pointless to make room for the bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal just after closing it.

c) In case of 13 ♗c2 it is important for Black immediately to break free with 13...c6!,

when he seems fine after 14 dxc6 ♘xc6. The problem with the natural 13...♗b7 is the typical 14 b3 c6 15 c4, when White establishes a central bind with Black's knight very passively placed on d8. We shall examine similar positions in Line 5B, but there the black knight is on e7, where it supports counterplay on the kingside and in the centre.

d) After the thematic but somewhat slow 13 ♘f1 *(D)*, Black must be accurate: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d1) 13...c6?! 14 dxc6 ♘xc6 is met with 15 ♗g5! ♗e7 16 ♘e3 ♗b7 17 ♘f5 ±.

d2) 13...g6 was tried in Balcerowski-Luoto, corr. 1977, but we believe 14 a4 ♗b7 15 ♗g5 ♗g7 16 ♕d2 should give White an advantage.

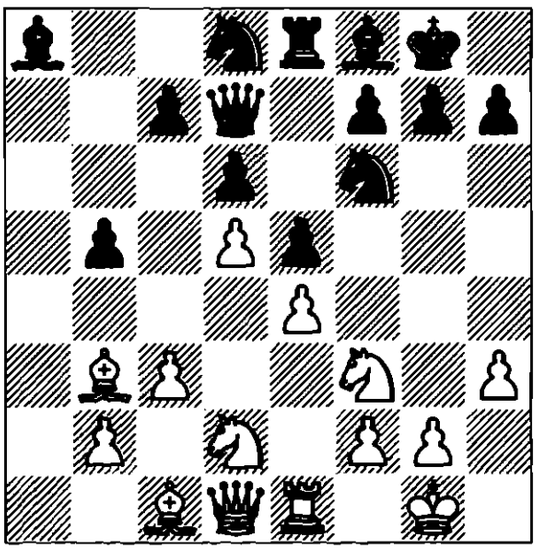
d3) We believe Black should take time for 13...h6!, ruling out ♗g5. Then White must choose between 14 a4 (which should transpose: 14...♗b7 15 axb5 axb5 16 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 – *13 a4 ♗b7 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 16 ♘f1 h6*) and the independent 14 ♘g3 ♗b7 (14...♘b7!?, heading for c5, also seems playable) 15 a4 c6 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 19 ♕e2 ♘e6 with roughly equal chances.

13...♗b7 14 axb5

Again it's not clear that this is best, but it's the easiest line to deal with as we now transpose to positions where there is some practical experience to draw on. A reasonable line is 14 ♕e2 c6 15 dxc6 ♕xc6, when play develops in normal patterns; e.g., 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 18 c4 bxc4 19 ♗xc4 ♕c7 and Black is fine.

14...axb5 15 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 *(D)*

This position has so far only arisen by transposition from move-orders where White played d5 at a later stage.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16 ♘f1

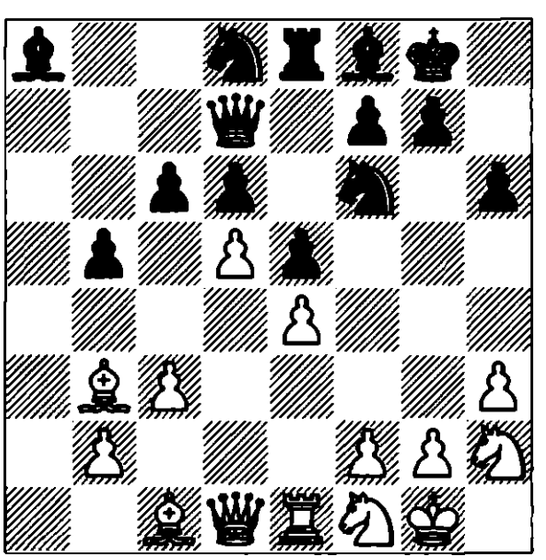
Black had no problems after 16 c4 c6 17 dxc6 (17 cxb5? is of course met by 17...cxd5!, taking over the centre) 17...♗xc6 18 cxb5 ♗xb5 19 ♘c4 ♕c7 in Passoni-Almada, Mendrisio 1988.

16...h6!

This is probably necessary prophylaxis as 16...c6?! 17 ♗g5! is definitely uncomfortable.

17 ♘3h2 c6!? *(D)*

An anonymous ChessBase annotator suggested this natural move as an improvement over 17...♘b7?! 18 ♗c2 ♘c5 (18...c6 19 ♘e3 cxd5 20 exd5 ±) 19 b4 ♘a6 (19...♘a4 20 ♗xa4 bxa4 21 c4 ±) 20 ♘g4, which gave White a very clear plus in Kasparov-Karpov, Moscow Wch (46) 1984/5.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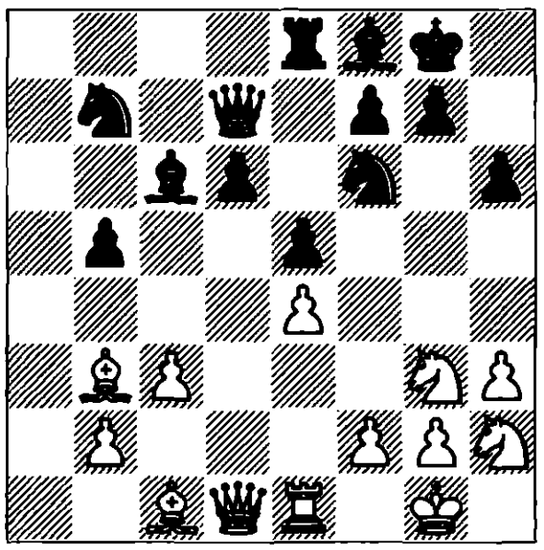
18 ♘g4

After 18 dxc6 ♗xc6 19 ♘g3, there should be some room for personal interpretation of the position. However, Black's most optimistic try seems to fail: 19...d5?! 20 exd5 ♗xd5 21 ♘g4! ♘xg4 22 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 23 ♗xd5 ♘f6 24 ♗f3

and the infamous 'Spanish bishop' secures White a clear advantage. Therefore we recommend 19...♘b7 *(D)* with the following preliminary lines:



a) 20 ♗c2 d5 =.

b) 20 ♗d5 is a typical computer move, which seems pretty pointless after the sober reply 20...♘c5.

c) 20 ♘g4 ♘xg4 21 hxg4 ♘c5 22 ♗d5 (White must stop ...d5) 22...♗xd5 23 ♕xd5 and now:

c1) Black should avoid 23...♕xg4? 24 b4 ♘e6 25 ♕xb5, when White's passed b-pawn will be very strong.

c2) After 23...♕e6! it seems that Black is very close to equality:

c21) 24 ♕xe6 fxe6 =.

c22) 24 ♖d1 ♕xg4 25 ♗e3 (25 b4? ♘a4 ∓) 25...h5 26 b4 ♘e6 = (26...h4!?).

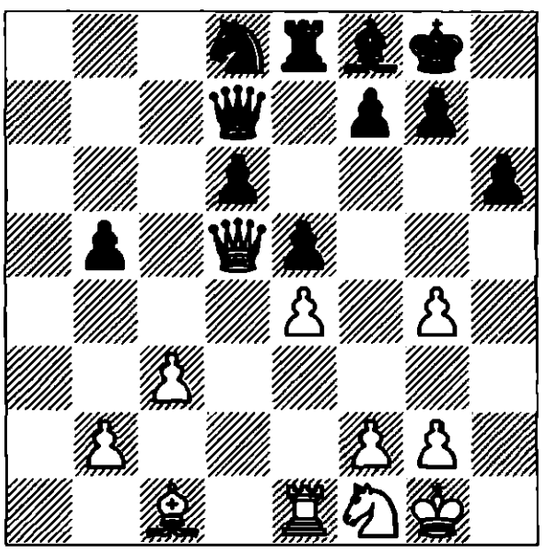
c23) 24 ♗e3 ♖b8 25 b4 ♕xd5 26 exd5 ♘a4 is equal.

18...♘xg4 19 hxg4 cxd5

We don't understand 19...♗b7, which was played in Teichmeister-Lueers, corr. 2000. It appears that Black makes a waiting move in a position where he must fight vigorously for control over d5. After 20 g5 hxg5 21 ♗xg5 cxd5 22 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 23 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 24 ♕xd5 b4 25 c4 ♕a4 26 ♘e3 White had a textbook case of a 'good knight versus bad bishop' semi-endgame.

20 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 21 ♕xd5 *(D)*

21 exd5, trying to play against the stranded black d8-knight, is also possible, but we believe it poses Black fewer problems; e.g., 21...g6 (worse is 21...♘b7 22 b4! ♖c8 23 ♗d2 g6 24 ♘g3 ♗g7 25 ♕f3, when White's strategy succeeds) 22 ♘g3 ♗g7 23 ♕f3 (23 ♘e4 runs into 23...f5!) 23...♖f8 24 ♗e3 f5 25 gxf5 gxf5 26 ♘h5 f4 27 ♗b6 ♘f7 and by setting his pawn-majority in motion, Black has enough counterplay.



21...b4!

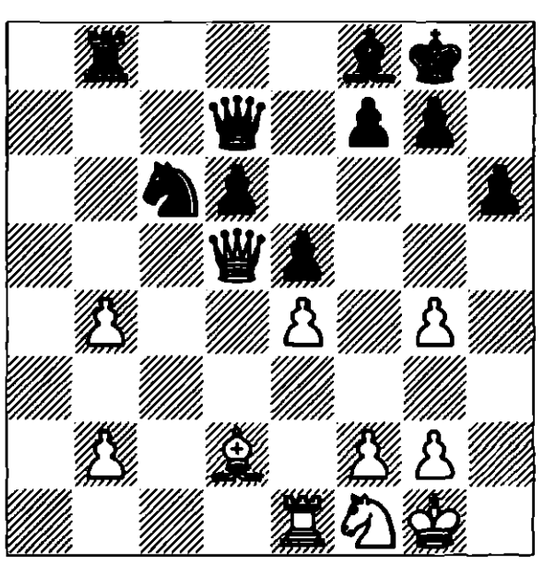
After the natural 21...♘e6 22 ♘e3, it is difficult for Black to create counterplay; for example, 22...♘f4 23 ♕d1 b4!? 24 g3! ♘e6 25 cxb4 or 22...b4 23 cxb4 ♘f4 24 ♕b3!.

22 cxb4

On 22 c4, Black continues 22...♕xg4 23 ♕b5 ♖e6! and he can easily take over the initiative with moves such as ...♖g6 and ...h5.

22...♘c6 23 ♗d2 ♖b8 *(D)*

23...♘e7!? 24 ♕d3 d5 is interesting, but White is probably also very slightly better after 25 exd5 ♕xd5 26 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 27 b5 f6 28 ♘e3, etc.



24 ♘e3

White cannot save the pawn. After 24 ♕c4 ♘xb4! 25 ♗xb4? (25 ♘e3 transposes to the main line) 25...♕a4 Black solves all his problems immediately.

24...♘xb4 25 ♕c4 ♕e6

We believe Black is very close to equal; e.g., 26 ♖c1 ♕xc4 27 ♖xc4 d5! 28 exd5 ♘d3 29 ♗c3 f6 and the b2-pawn is doomed.

Conclusion:

By closing the centre with 12 d5, White slows down the pace of the game, and it seems that after 12...♘d8 Black is able to create effective counterplay.

5B: Regrouping, 12 ♗c2

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♕d7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8)

12 ♗c2

This is mainly preparation for the ♘f1-hop. However, as we shall see, it is not sufficient in itself.

12 a3 ♗b7 13 ♗c2 is an alternative move-order, transposing to note 'b' to White's 13th move.

12...♗b7 *(D)*

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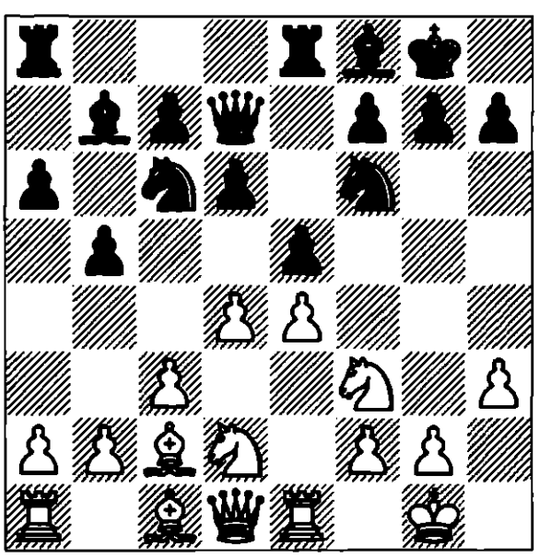


This position can also arise from the Zaitsev: *9...♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 ♗c2 ♕d7.*

13 d5

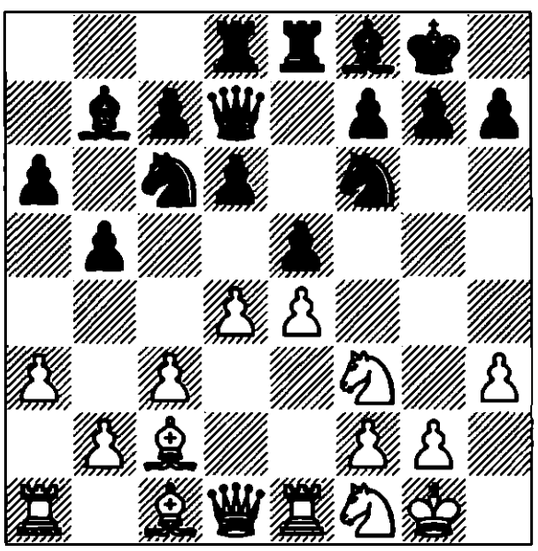
Or:

a) It is worth noting that White still cannot play 13 ♘f1? due to the tactical point 13...exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4, winning the bishop-pair. Then Black is already better.

b) 13 a3 stops ...♘b4 and thus prepares ♘f1. It is a line worthy of serious treatment:

b1) 13...♖ad8 is the most popular move in this position, but it is strange that the logical reply 14 ♘f1! *(D)* seems to be untested (in practice White almost exclusively resorts to 14 d5 ♘e7, as in Grishchuk-Bacrot, Cap d'Agde rpd 2003, when play is very similar to the main line).

B



b11) 14...d5 (this ambitious attempt to solve all Black's problems immediately does not quite work) 15 exd5 (15 ♗g5 is easier to deal with: 15...dxe4! 16 ♗xf6 exf3 17 ♗xd8 fxg2 18 ♘g3 ♖xd8 and Black is doing fine) 15...♕xd5 16 ♗b3! ♕d6 17 dxe5 ♘xe5 (or 17...♕xd1 18 ♗xd1) 18 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 19 ♖xe5 ♕xd1 20 ♗xd1 ♖xd1 21 b4! and Black does not have enough compensation.

b12) 14...exd4 15 cxd4 d5 16 e5 ♘e4 17 ♘g3!? ♘xg3 18 fxg3 with a promising kingside initiative for White.

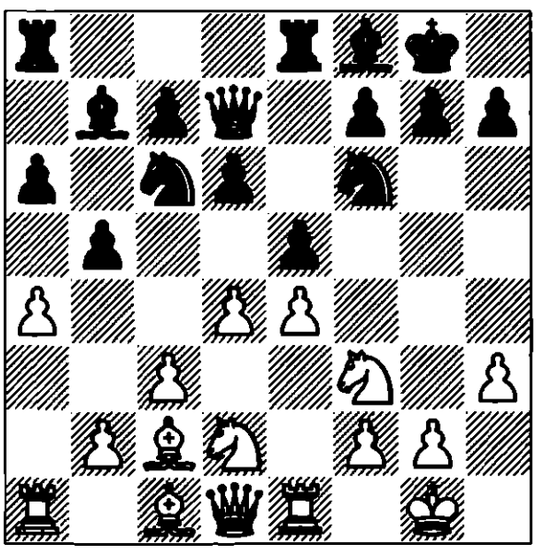
b13) It seems that Black has to play 14...g6 15 ♘g3 ♗g7, when play might develop in a Breyer direction after 16 d5 ♘b8 (following 16...♘e7 17 b3 c6 18 c4 it is difficult for Black to create counterplay) 17 b3 c6 18 c4 ♕c7 followed by ...♘bd7. Black is solid, but White should enjoy a small edge.

b2) An interesting alternative is 13...♘d8!?, which prevents the ♘f1-hop because of the pressure on e4. The knight is also approaching the inviting f4-square! Dworakowska-Lugovoi, Jyväskylä 1998 continued in very instructive fashion: 14 b4 g6 15 ♗b2 exd4!? 16 cxd4 ♗g7 (very cool; normally when Black takes on d4 and gives White a mobile pawn duo in the

centre, he immediately challenges it with ...c5 or ...d5, but here Black plays for restriction and long-range surveillance; obviously, once one of the white pawns moves forward, his centre loses a lot of its mobility) 17 ♕b1 ♘e6 18 ♗c3 ♘h5 19 ♕b2 d5 (finally!) 20 ♖ad1 ♘ef4 21 ♘e5 and now 21...♖xe5! 22 dxe5 ♘xg2! gave Black a winning attack.

c) 13 a4 *(D)* is White's principal alternative:

B



c1) 13...g6 14 d5 ♘e7 15 c4 (15 b3 ♗g7 16 c4 c6 – *15 c4 c6 16 b3 ♗g7*) 15...c6 16 b3 ♗g7 17 ♗a3 ♘h5 18 ♗d3 bxa4 19 bxa4 c5 20 ♖b1 ♖eb8 21 ♖b3 ♗c8 22 ♕c2 ♖xb3 23 ♕xb3 ♖a7 24 ♕b6 ♖b7 ∓ Arakhamia Grant-Spassky, Copenhagen 1997. This example is well worth studying closely, as the ex-world champion is a recognized Closed Ruy Lopez connoisseur.

c2) 13...exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 is another link to the Zaitsev Variation:

c21) 15...h6 is a direct transposition to a branch of the Zaitsev Variation, where Black doesn't immediately challenge White's perfect pawn-centre with ...c5 or ...d5, but rather tries to improve his position on the queenside first (with moves like ...bxa4, followed by ...a5 and ...♖a6), waiting for a more appropriate moment. We are not convinced that this is a fully sound approach but nevertheless we deal with this position in Line 1F.

c22) 15...c5? looks premature, because after 16 d5 the queen is misplaced on d7. As we remember from Chapters 1 and 2, d7 is the square for the king's knight; taking control of the vital e5-square (playing e5 is a major plan for White) and also enhancing Black's plans on the queenside (...c4 followed by ...♘c5-d3) and in the centre (...f5, undermining White's d5-pawn at the cost of a weakening of the kingside).

c23) 15...g6 is an interesting option, however, claiming that Black has an improved Zaitsev where he managed without ...h6:

c231) 16 e5 looks premature. After 16...dxe5 17 dxe5 ♘h5 Black was already very comfortable in Sznapik-Goldin, Warsaw 1990, the d3-square being an obvious weakness in White's camp.

c232) 16 d5 c6! also works well for Black; e.g., 17 ♕b3 a5 18 dxc6 ♕xc6 19 ♕c3 (19 ♘d4 bxa4!) 19...♗g7 20 ♕xc6 ♗xc6 21 ♘d4 ♗xe4! 22 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 23 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 24 ♗xe4 ♖e8! and the tactics worked in Black's favour in B.Ivanović-Nikolić, Nikšić 1983.

c233) 16 b3 c5 17 ♗b2 (17 d5 ♗g7 is excellent for Black, since the natural 18 ♗b2? is refuted by 18...♘xe4!) 17...cxd4 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 20 ♗xd4 ♗g7 21 ♘f1 ♘c6 22 ♗b2 ♘e5! = Vescovi-A.Ivanov, Buenos Aires 2005.

13...♘e7 *(D)*

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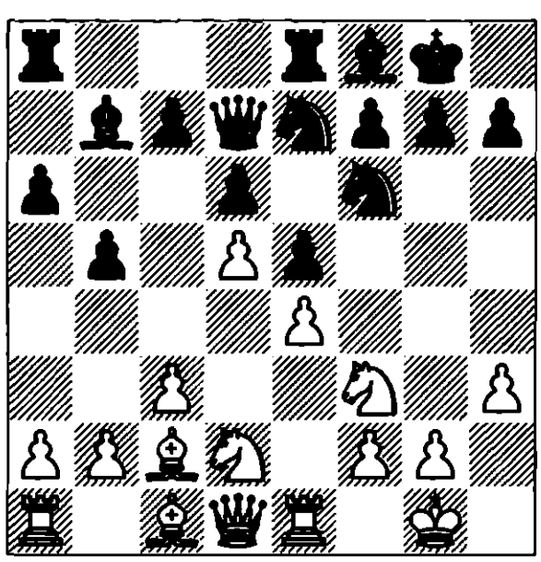


It may be difficult to decide between e7 and d8 as a location for the queen's knight. We cannot offer any easy and definite rule, but as we mentioned in Line 5A, it is important to go to e7 if White can immediately establish a central bind with b3 and c4. Otherwise Black might be stuck with a poor knight on d8 with no counterplay whatsoever.

14 b3

For 14 ♘b3!?, see Leif's Preface, 'Step 11: Tournament Practice'.

a) 14 c4 c6 15 b3 is just another move-order.

b) The untested 14 ♘f1 looks fairly natural but after 14...c6 Black has a firm grip on d5 and good chances.

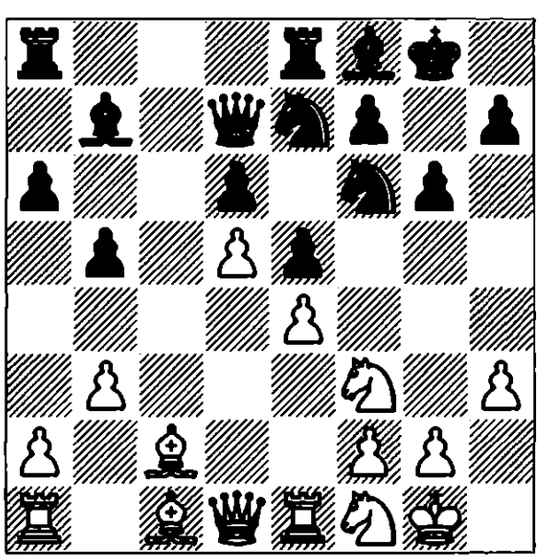
14...c6 15 c4 g6

The attempt to establish a knight on f4 by 15...♘g6 looks tempting but can hardly be sufficient: 16 ♘f1 ♘h5 (16...h6 17 ♔h2 cxd5 18 cxd5 ♘h5 19 ♘g1 ♘f6 20 ♘e3 ♘h7 21 a4 ± Alzate-Am.Rodriguez, Bayamo 1984) and now White can drive the knight away immediately with the typical 17 ♔h2 ♘hf4 18 ♘g1! followed by g3 or he can play 17 ♘e3 with the same idea.

16 ♘f1 cxd5

16...♗g7?! 17 ♘g3! (17 ♘e3?! cxd5 18 cxd5 ♘h5 looks fine for Black) leads to a type of position Black should probably avoid. Here it's too late for the ...♘h5 idea and it's actually hard to come up with a plan at all. In the Breyer, as already explained, White's central expansion is considered relatively harmless these days. Black's standard plan is to capture on c4, play ...a5 and ...♗a6 and then put a knight on c5. Black's problem here, however, is the knight on e7 which is a long way from c5 (in the Breyer this knight is on d7).

17 cxd5 *(D)*



17...♘h5!

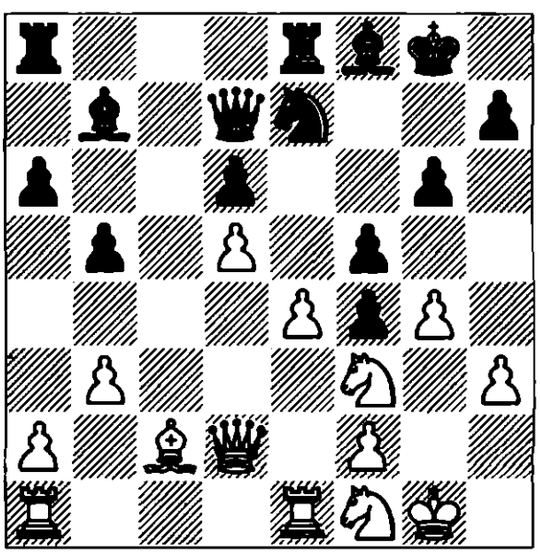
Now this plan seems to give Black good counterplay; ...f5, undermining d5, is on the agenda. The position resembles a King's Indian. Again 17...♗g7?! would be a serious inaccuracy, as after 18 ♘g3! the f6-knight cannot move to h5, and Black is struggling to find an active plan.

18 g4

This is of course a radical solution, but after quiet play Black certainly must be fine.

18...♘f4 19 ♗xf4 exf4 20 ♕d2 f5! *(D)*

The key move for Black, undermining White's stronghold on d5 and unleashing all the energy latent in Black's position. 20...♗g7 is very natural, but in that case 21 ♕xf4!? ♗xa1 22 ♖xa1 might be a strong continuation for White, with tremendous compensation for the exchange. We believe that Black has excellent counterplay after the text-move (an evaluation with which the computers seem to agree) and will only give some sample lines of how play might continue:



21 exf5

Other moves are less challenging; e.g., 21 gxf5 gxf5 22 ♕xf4 fxe4 23 ♗xe4 ♘xd5 and Black is fine, or 21 ♕xf4 fxe4, etc.

21...gxf5 22 ♕xf4 ♗g7

Black's chances are at least equal. The pawn on d5 will drop very soon, after which the bishops point menacingly down both the long diagonals. We have to stress one particular matter though: Black should not take on g4 too early, as in that case there might be a lethal bishop sacrifice on h7.

Conclusion:

Play is complicated but Black should be OK if he plays actively and makes sure that his e7-knight takes part in the play.

5C: Regrouping, 12 a3 and Rare 12th Moves

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♕d7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8)

12 a3

As in the parallel Zaitsev lines (where Black has played ...♗b7 instead of ...♕d7) this is mainly preparation for the ♘f1-hop. Black has some latent threats against e4, so White must show some care:

a) 12 ♘f1?! may be barely playable even though Black's set-up was meant to prevent this standard regrouping. After 12...exd4, White has:

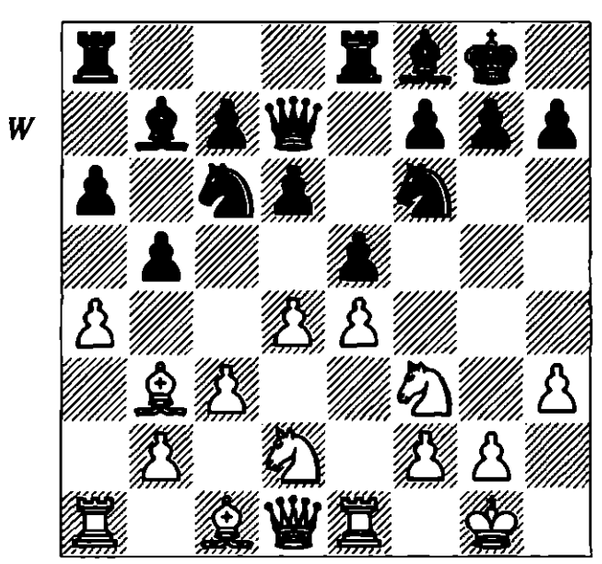
a1) 13 ♘g5 ♖e7 (13...d5 14 exd5 ♖xe1 15 ♕xe1 ♘a5 looks sufficient too) 14 cxd4 h6 ∓.

a2) 13 cxd4 ♖xe4 14 ♗g5 ♖xe1 15 ♕xe1 ♗e7 16 d5 ♘e5 (16...♘d8 17 ♘g3 is unclear) 17 ♘xe5 dxe5 18 ♕xe5 h6 19 ♗h4 ♗b7 is slightly better for Black.

a3) 13 ♘xd4 ♗b7 (13...♘xe4? 14 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 15 ♗d5 +–) 14 f3 (14 ♘g3 ♘xd4 15 ♕xd4 c5 ∓) 14...d5! 15 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 16 exd5 (16 e5 ♘d7 17 f4 ♘c5 18 ♗c2 d4 gives Black a promising initiative) 16...♘xd5 and Black was obviously doing fine in Priebe-R.Stern, Mecklenburg 2000.

b) 12 dxe5 appears completely harmless: 12...♘xe5 13 ♘xe5 dxe5 14 ♕f3 c5 15 ♘f1 ♗b7 16 ♘g3 c4 17 ♗c2 ♕e6 18 b3 ♘d7 19 bxc4 bxc4 20 ♘f5 ♘c5 21 ♖b1 ♗c6 22 ♗a3 ♖ed8 = Ma.Tseitlin-Lugovoi, St Petersburg tt 1999.

c) 12 a4 is very lightly tested, but that may be more due to the relative rarity of 9...♕d7 than to any fault with the move itself. We suggest 12...♗b7 *(D)*, leading to a position which has arisen more frequently from the Zaitsev move-order *9...♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 ♕d7*.



White now has:

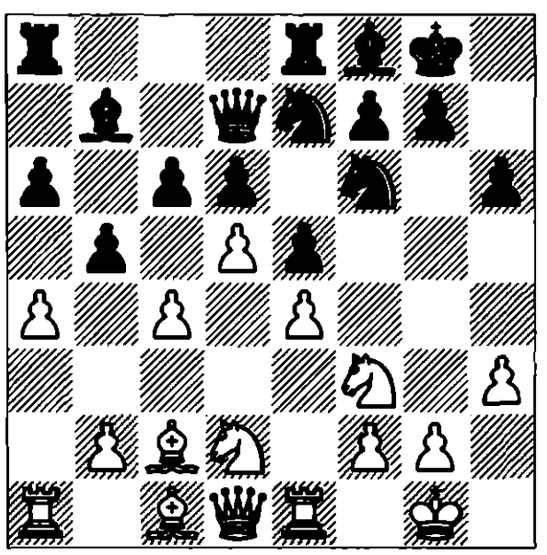
c1) 13 ♗c2 – *12 ♗c2 ♗b7 13 a4* (Line 5B).

c2) 13 axb5 has little independent value as after 13...axb5 14 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 (14...♖xa8? 15 ♘g5 ♘d8 16 ♘df3 c5 17 dxe5 dxe5 18 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 19 ♘xf7 ♘xf7 20 ♗e6 ±) 15 d5 (15 dxe5 ♘xe5 16 ♘xe5 dxe5 =) Black can immediately transpose to Line 5A with 15...♘d8.

c3) After 13 d5 Black has a familiar choice:

c31) 13...♘d8 transposes directly back to Line 5A (*12 d5 ♘d8 13 a4 ♗b7*).

c32) 13...♘e7!? 14 ♗c2 h6 leads to a position that can also arise from the *9...♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 h6 13 ♗c2 ♕d7 14 d5 ♘e7* move-order. After 15 c4 c6 *(D)* White has tried:

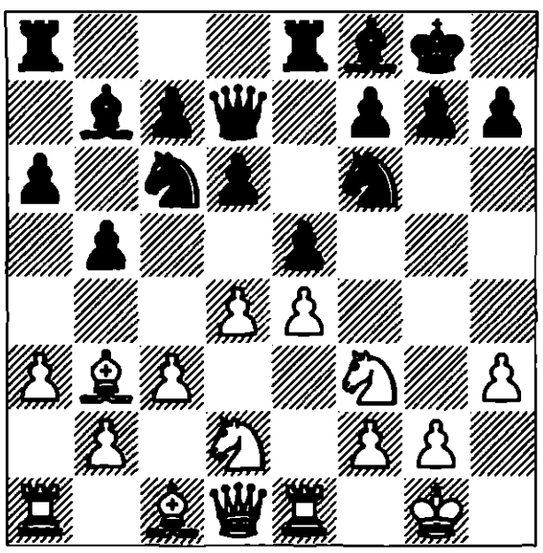


c321) 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 19 cxb5 ♗xb5 20 ♘b1 ♘c6 21 ♘c3 ♘b4 22 ♘xb5 ♕xb5 23 ♗d2 ♖a1 24 ♗b1 d5 25 ♘xe5 dxe4 26 ♘g4 ♘xg4 27 hxg4 ♘d3 ½-½ A.Sokolov-Ibragimov, Elista 1994.

c322) 16 b3 g6 17 ♘f1 (or 17 ♗b2 ♗g7 18 dxc6 ♗xc6 19 c5 ♘h5 20 ♘f1 dxc5 21 ♕xd7 ♗xd7 22 ♗xe5 ♘c6 23 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 24 e5 ♖ac8 ∓ Nijboer-Zhang Zhong, Wijk aan Zee 2003) 17...♘h5! (before White settles comfortably on g3) 18 ♘e3 cxd5 19 cxd5 ♗g7 20 ♖a2 ♘f4 21 ♔h2 f5 and Black had grabbed the initiative in most instructive fashion in Kotz-Ibragimov, Graz 1994. We give the rest of the game in full, as it is very thematic: 22 ♘g1 fxe4 23 ♗xe4 ♖f8 24 g3 ♘h5 25 ♘g4 ♘f6 26 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 27 ♘f3 ♖c8 28 ♕d3 ♖c5 29 ♗a3 ♖xd5! (that was Black's point) 30 ♗xd5+ ♘xd5 31 axb5 ♕f7 32 bxa6 ♗a8 33 ♖ee2 (White was beyond salvation anyway) 33...♖xf3 34 ♕c4 ♘c3 35 ♕c8+ ♕f8 36 ♕e6+ ♔h7 37 ♗xd6 ♘xe2! 0-1.

12...♗b7 *(D)*

12...g6 also appears fully playable but we shall restrict our coverage to this natural move. The resulting positions can also arise from the move-order *9...♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a3 ♕d7.*



13 ♗a2!?

Now White can meet ...♘a5 with an immediate b4 (before Black has had any chance to play ...c5). Also, keeping the bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal forces Black to keep an eye on f7. The alternatives don't appear threatening:

a) 13 ♗c2 – *12 ♗c2 ♗b7 13 a3.*

b) 13 d5 and now 13...♘e7 has been the choice in some top-level games:

b1) 14 ♗a2 c6 is very comfortable for Black if after 15 dxc6 ♗xc6 16 ♘g5 d5 17 ♘df3 he notices that White threatens ♘xf7 and plays 17...♘g6.

b2) 14 c4 c6 15 ♗c2 h6 16 b4 a5 17 ♗b2 axb4 18 axb4 ♖xa1 19 ♗xa1 bxc4 20 ♗a4 (Liu Wenzhe-Xu Jun, China 1987) 20...♕c7 ∓.

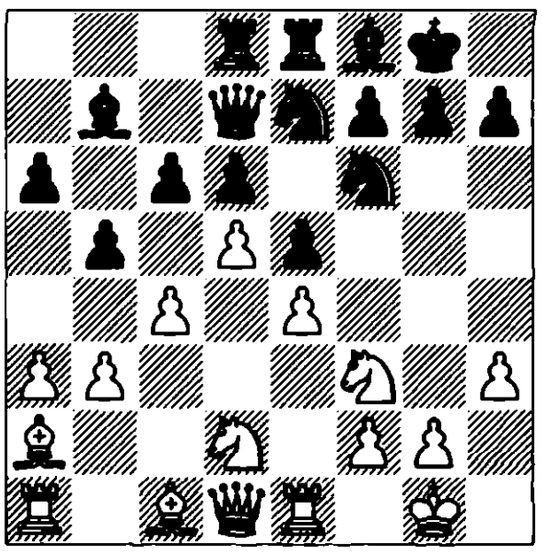
b3) 14 ♘f1 ♘g6 15 ♗c2 (15 ♘g3 ♘f4 16 ♕c2 g6 17 ♗xf4 exf4 18 ♘f1 ♖e7 gives Black counterplay) 15...c6 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 ♗g5 ♘h5 18 ♘h4 ♘gf4 19 ♕g4 (19 ♘f5 h6 20 ♗h4 g6 21 ♘5e3 ♗e7 22 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 is fine for Black) 19...♕xg4 20 hxg4 ♘e6 21 ♗d2 ♘f6 22 g5 ♘d7 23 ♖ad1 a5 24 ♗c1 g6 25 ♘h2 b4 and Black had sufficient counterplay in Bacrot-I.Sokolov, Reykjavik 2003.

13...♖ad8

This takes away a square from the c6-knight and it is not entirely clear that it improves the rook's position either. You could also consider the semi-waiting 13...h6, which was a success in Fiensch-Arens, corr. 1994 after 14 b4 a5 15 d5 ♘e7 16 c4 axb4 17 axb4 ♖a4 18 c5 ♖ea8 19 ♕c2 c6. A possible improvement for White could be 14 ♕c2, preparing the ♘f1-hop.

14 d5 ♘e7 15 c4 c6 16 b3 *(D)*

16 dxc6 ♘xc6 17 cxb5 axb5 18 ♘g5 d5 looks fine for Black.



16...g6!?

We offer this as an improvement over 16...a5 17 ♘f1 a4 18 dxc6 ♗xc6 19 cxb5 ♗xb5 20 ♗g5, which didn't work out too well for Black in Bruzon-Morović, Havana 2002. What follows is pure analysis and mainly meant to illustrate some of the possibilities inherent in the position.

17 ♘f1 cxd5 18 cxd5 ♘h5

This should be the standard plan for Black – compare with Line 5B. He has moves like ...♗g7, ...h6 and ...f5 at an appropriate moment (of course making sure that the h5-knight won't drop off after exf5 and ...gxf5). White's bishop looks slightly misplaced on a2 here. It would perform a better job on the f1-a6 diagonal, pointing at Black's queenside after the thematic a4.

19 b4 ♗g7 20 ♗b3 h6 21 a4 f5

Black's counterplay is very tangible and White needs to concern himself with the safety of his d5-pawn.

22 axb5 axb5 23 exf5 gxf5

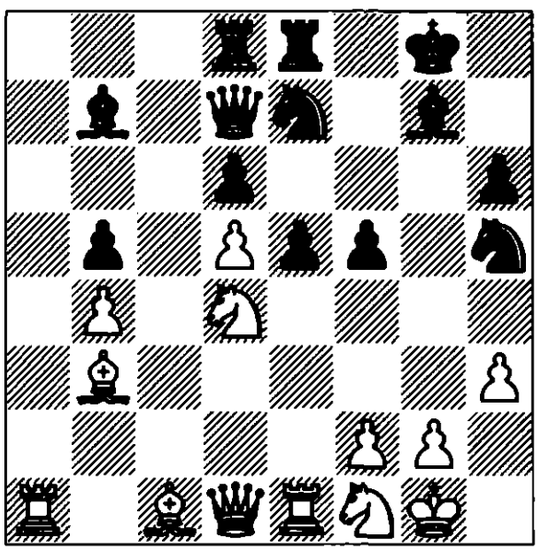
The position is becoming very complicated. Black has two interesting (but messy!) alternatives that both lead to unclear play:

a) 23...♘xf5!? 24 g4 e4.

b) 23...e4!? 24 ♘d4 ♘xf5 25 ♘xf5 ♗xa1 26 ♘xh6+ ♔h7.

24 ♘d4!? *(D)*

White exploits the loose position of the h5-knight.



24...♘f6 25 ♘c6

After 25 ♘e6 ♖a8 26 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 27 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 White is going to lose his d5-pawn, but he will have some compensation in the form of a weakened black kingside.

25...♖a8 26 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 27 ♘e3 ♔h8 28 ♘xe7 ♖xe7 29 ♕f3 f4 30 ♘g4

Black has no reason to complain. We do not pretend that this analysis is an exhaustive overview of all the possibilities in the position, but hope that it illustrates some plans and ideas for Black.

Conclusion:

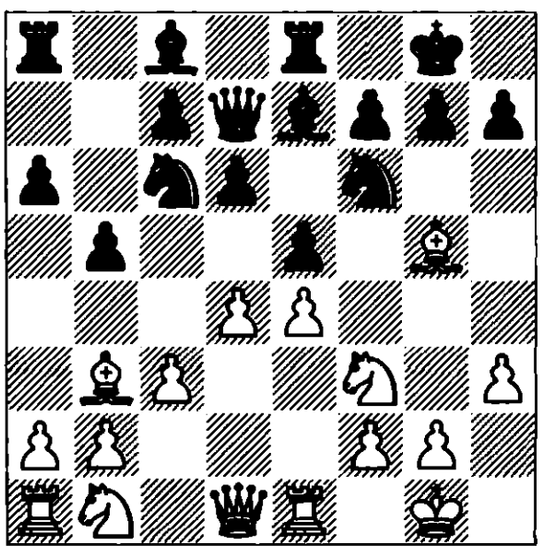
Admittedly the lines given after 16...g6 are pure analysis, awaiting tournament testing. However, the lack of practical examples is part of the line's charm. To be honest we quite like Black's counterplay on the kingside *à la* King's Indian. However, there is an important difference compared to the King's Indian: in the Ruy, with the light-squared bishop on b7, Black's ...f5 break is mainly used to undermine the d5-pawn, not to start a direct kingside attack.

5D: Regrouping, 11 ♗g5

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♕d7 10 d4 ♖e8)

11 ♗g5!? *(D)*

This appears quite logical as it rules out ....♗f8 (Black cannot allow ♗xf6, damaging the kingside pawn-structure). However, as an exchange of dark-squared bishops should ease Black's play, we were at first surprised that this line posed problems at all. Nevertheless, on second thought it may not be so surprising. After all this is a normal developing move, and White's central space advantage is fairly stable.



11...h6

11...g6 12 ♘bd2 ♘h5!? is an untested idea.

12 ♗h4 ♗b7

Black could also try 12...g5!? 13 ♗g3 ♗f8 14 ♘bd2 ♗g7. Black claims that the g3-bishop is out of play, like in the famous game Winter-Capablanca, Hastings 1919. However, we are not sure we trust Black's position here. The bishop is still highly influential on g3, pointing at e5, and ...♘h5 is hard to make work tactically because of the ♘xe5 idea. In short, Black is in serious danger of running out of useful moves very quickly. As a result he may have to concede ground in the centre, which could prove disastrous with a weakened king position. Some plausible continuations:

a) 15 a3 ♗b7 and now:

a1) 16 ♗c2 ♖ad8 17 ♘f1 (the 17 d5 ♘e7 18 b3 c6 19 c4 idea does not look impressive here because of 19...cxd5 20 cxd5 {20 exd5 ♘h7 followed by ...f5} 20...♘g6 and Black has a very comfortable and promising set-up on the kingside) 17...exd4 18 cxd4 ♘a5 followed by ...c5.

a2) The critical line seems to be 16 ♗a2 ♖ad8 17 ♖c1, when Black has problems finding useful moves; e.g., 17...g4!? (what else?) 18 hxg4 (18 ♘h4 exd4 19 ♘f5 dxc3 20 ♖xc3 also looks quite scary) 18...♕xg4 and Black just barely hangs on.

b) After 15 a4 ♗b7 it seems Black is alright:

b1) 16 dxe5 ♘xe5 17 ♗c2 ♘c4 18 ♘xc4 bxc4 19 ♘d2 ♖e7 20 a5 ♖ae8 looked decent for Black in Yudasin-Rusakov, Leningrad 1987.

b2) 16 d5 ♘a5 17 ♗c2 c6 18 axb5 axb5 19 b4 ♘c4 20 ♘xc4 bxc4 21 dxc6 ♗xc6 22 ♕e2 ♕e6 = Savon-I.Zaitsev, Moscow 1991.

b3) 16 ♗c2 ♖ad8 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♗d3 exd4 19 cxd4 (or 19 ♘xd4!? ♘xd4 20 cxd4 c5 21 d5 c4 22 ♗c2 ♘h7! with distinct counterplay for Black, in the spirit of the Modern Benoni; the knight can re-enter the game via f8 and g6) 19...♘b4 20 ♗b1 c5 and Black's counterplay is very real.

13 ♘bd2 ♘h7!? *(D)*

Or:

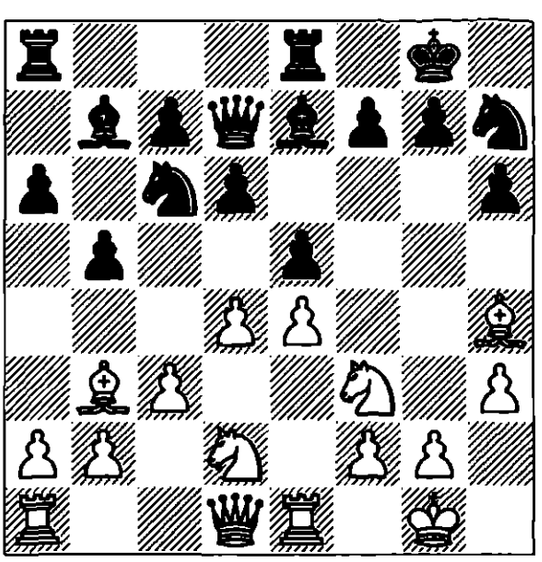
a) Routine development with 13...♖ad8 may be considered.

b) 13...g5!? has been tried in some high-level correspondence games. It seems rather similar to *12...g5* in our previous note and it is not clear whether this is an improved version. 14 ♗g3 ♗f8 and now:

b1) 15 ♗c2 ♗g7 16 dxe5 ♘xe5 17 ♘d4 (17 ♘xe5 dxe5 18 ♘b3 ±) 17...d5 18 exd5 ♕xd5 19 f3 c5 20 ♘f5 ♗f8 21 ♘e3 ½-½ Hammar-Erlandsson, corr. 1976.

b2) 15 dxe5 dxe5 16 ♕e2 ♗c5 (16...g4!?) 17 ♖ad1 ± Shmit-A.Zaitsev, USSR corr. Ch 1969.

W



14 ♗g3

White keeps the light-squared bishops on the board while pressurizing e5.

a) 14 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 is harmless as exchanges help Black, who is slightly cramped.

b) 14 d5 ♘d8 (14...♘a5 15 ♗c2 c6 looks like an improvement; e.g., 16 b4 ♘c4 17 ♘xc4 bxc4 18 ♗a4 ♕c7, etc.) 15 a4 c6 16 c4 ♘f8 17 dxc6 ♗xc6 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 20 cxb5 ♘de6 21 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 22 ♘c4 ± Emelin-Lugovoi, St Petersburg 1998.

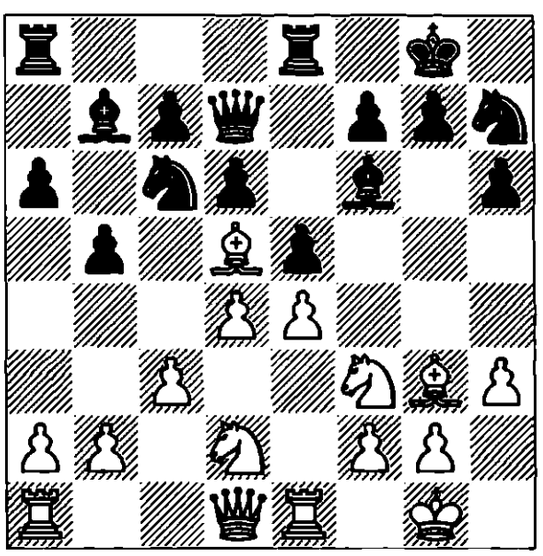
14...♗f6 15 ♗d5 *(D)*

There are some untested moves that deserve practical testing:

a) 15 ♘f1 ♖ad8 16 ♘e3?! exd4 17 cxd4 ♖xe4 18 ♗c2 ♖e7 19 ♕d3 g6 20 ♘d5 ♖xe1+ 21 ♖xe1 ♘e7 22 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 23 ♗h4 ♘ed5 24 ♕d2 ♔g7 ∓.

b) 15 d5 ♘a5 (15...♘d8 and 15...♘e7 are also possible) 16 ♗c2 c6 17 b4 ♘c4 18 ♘xc4 bxc4 19 ♗a4 ♕c7 20 dxc6 ♗xc6 21 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 22 ♕e2 (or 22 a4 ♖ad8) 22...a5 gives Black sufficient counterplay.

B



15...♖ab8

15...♘d8!? 16 dxe5 dxe5 and then:

a) 17 ♘b3 c6 18 ♘c5 ♕c7 19 ♘xb7 (19 ♗b3 should be answered by 19...♗c8, planning ...♘b7) 19...♘xb7 20 ♗b3 ♖ad8 21 ♕e2 ♘c5 22 ♗c2 ♘g5 23 b4 ♘ce6 24 a4 ♘f4 25 ♗xf4 exf4 seems fully satisfactory for Black.

b) 17 ♘f1 ♘g5 (unfortunately for Black, after 17...♗xd5 18 ♕xd5! ♕xd5 19 exd5 he is in dire straits on the e-file) 18 h4 ♘xf3+ 19 ♕xf3 a5 (19...c6!?) 20 ♖ad1 ± Am.Rodriguez-Day, Lucerne OL 1982.

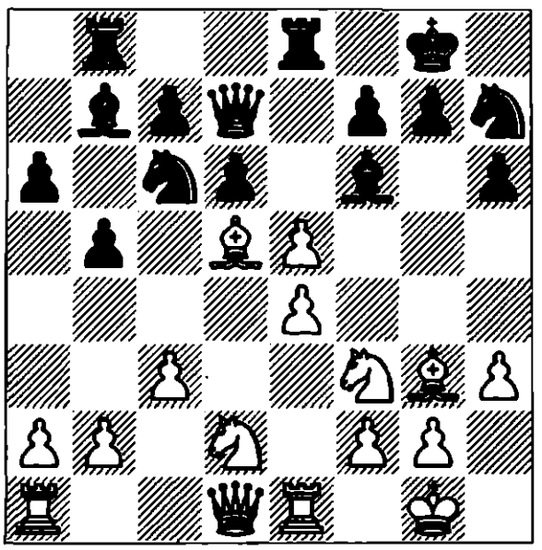
16 dxe5 *(D)*

This is the only move encountered in practice, but there are alternatives for White:

a) 16 ♘b3 ♘f8 planning ...♘e6 or ...♘g6 seems OK for Black.

b) 16 ♘f1!? is a serious option, when the tempting tactical sequence 16...exd4 17 cxd4 ♘xd4? is flawed: 18 ♗xb7! ♘xf3+ 19 ♕xf3

♘g5 (or 19...♖xb7 20 e5 +–) 20 ♕f5! ♕xf5 21 exf5 ♖xe1 22 ♖xe1 ♖xb7 23 ♖e8+ ♔h7 24 h4 and White wins.



This is a critical position. Black has three recaptures and honestly we are not sure what to recommend:

16...♘xe5!?

We give this as the main line mainly because it is the only move tested in serious tournament play. Other moves:

a) 16...dxe5?! 17 b4 looks promising for White, who will soon install a knight on c5.

b) 16...♗xe5!?, however, is a serious alternative: 17 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 18 ♗xb7 ♖xb7, when Black still has to fight for equality:

b1) 19 ♗xe5 dxe5 20 ♘b3 ♕e7 =.

b2) 19 ♘f1 ♘f6 20 ♗h4 ♘h7 (20...♕e6 21 f4 ♘ed7 22 ♘g3 is no walk in the park for Black either) 21 ♘e3 b4 22 c4 ♕e6 23 ♕d5 ♖bb8 ±.

b3) 19 ♘b3 ♘f6 20 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 (20...dxe5 21 ♘c5 ♕xd1 22 ♖axd1 ♖b6) 21 f4 (21 f3 ♖b8 intending ...♖be8 and ...d5) 21...♖xe4 22 ♖xe4 ♘xe4 23 ♕d5 ♘c5 24 ♘xc5 c6 25 ♘xd7 (25 ♖d1 cxd5 26 ♘xd7 ♖xd7 27 ♖xd5 ♔f8 28 ♔f2 ♔e7 =) 25...cxd5 26 ♘f6+ gxf6 27 ♖d1 b4 28 ♖xd5 bxc3 29 bxc3 ♖b6 is drawish.

17 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 18 ♘xe5 ♗xe5

It is not clear how White should get an advantage against 18...dxe5: 19 ♘b3 ♕e7 20 ♕d5 (trying to keep c5 under control) 20...♖b6 21 ♕c5 (21 ♖ad1 ♖d6 22 ♕c5 ♖ed8 =) 21...♖d6! =.

19 f4 ♗f6 20 ♘b3

It wouldn't be honest to claim that Black has equality here. White has more space and slightly the better pieces (and not to be forgotten: a concrete threat in ♘c5!). We believe Black's best response is 20...♘f8, when 21 ♕f3 ♖bb8 22 ♖ad1 is a plausible continuation. Black is passive, but quite solid as the e5 break is hard for White to organize. For the reader who is sceptical about Black's chances in this position, we refer to the alternatives mentioned in the notes to moves 16 and 18.

Conclusion:

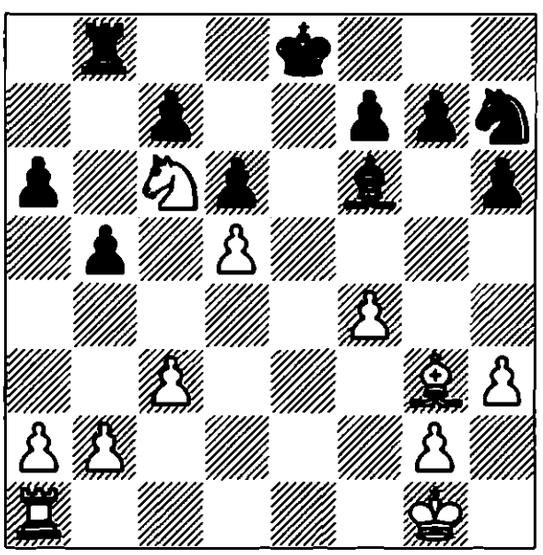
11 ♗g5 is a serious bid for an opening advantage.

Illustrative Game 14

A. Zakharov – Malevinsky

Rostov 1976

20...♕c6? 21 ♕d5 ♕xd5 22 exd5 ♔f8 23 ♖xe8+ ♔xe8 24 ♘a5 ♖b8 25 ♘c6 *(D)*



This should be won for White, but good technique is still required.

25...♖b7

25...♖a8 doesn't help because of 26 a4.

26 ♔f2 ♔d7 27 a3 ♘f8 28 f5 g6 29 ♖f1 gxf5?!

This makes things easier for White.

30 ♔e2 ♔e8 31 ♖xf5 ♗g5 32 ♗f4 ♗xf4 33 ♖xf4 ♘g6 34 ♖e4+ ♔f8 35 ♔f3 f6 36 ♖e6 ♘e5+ 37 ♘xe5 fxe5 38 ♖xh6

In addition to his extra pawn White also has the better pieces. There is nothing Black can do (except perhaps speeding up the end, which he stubbornly refuses to do).

38...a5 39 ♖h8+ ♔g7 40 ♖a8 b4 41 axb4 axb4 42 c4 b3 43 ♔e4 ♔f6 44 ♖a5 ♖b4 45

♔d3 ♖b8 46 ♖a1 ♖g8 47 ♖f1+ ♔g6 48 ♖f3 ♖a8 49 ♖g3+ ♔f6 50 ♖f3+ ♔g6 51 ♔c3 ♖b8 52 ♖f1 ♔g7 53 h4 ♔g6 54 g3 ♔g7 55 g4 ♔g6 56 ♖f5 ♔h6 57 ♖f7 ♖g8 58 ♖xc7 ♖xg4 59 ♖c6 ♖g3+ 60 ♔b4 ♔g6 61 ♖xd6+ ♔f5 62 c5 ♖g1 63 c6 ♖c1 64 h5 e4 65 h6 1-0

5E: Regrouping, Rare 10th and 11th Moves

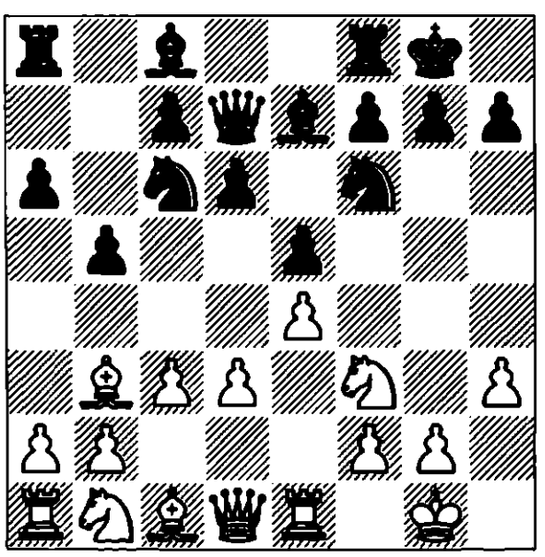
(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♕d7)

10 d4

10th-move alternatives are relatively harmless:

a) 10 a4 ♗b7 11 d3 ♖fe8 12 ♘bd2 ♗f8 13 axb5 axb5 14 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 15 ♘f1 ½-½ Banas-Lanc, Trnava 1989.

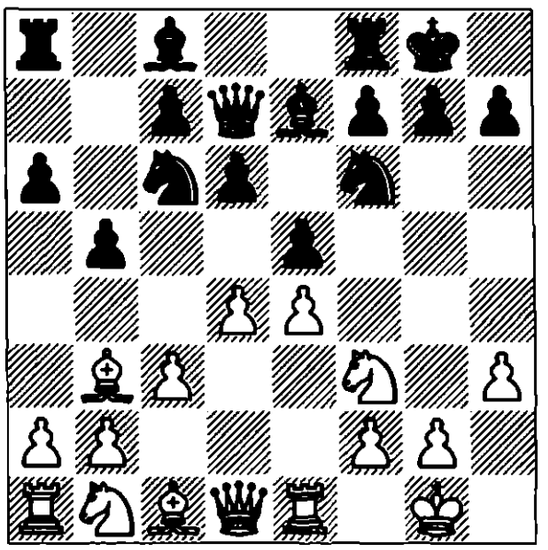
b) 10 d3 *(D)* doesn't exert any pressure on Black:



b1) 10...♘a5 11 ♗c2 c5 12 ♘bd2 ♗b7 13 ♘f1 leads to a familiar kind of position in which Black usually comes very close to equality; e.g., 13...♖fe8 14 ♘g3 g6 15 ♗g5 ♔g7 16 ♕d2 ♘g8 17 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 18 b4 ± Zuidema-Kostro, Wijk aan Zee 1971. Compare this with the Pilnik Variation in Line 6E.

b2) 10...♗b7 is a more ambitious approach. 11 ♘bd2 d5 (11...♖ae8!? 12 ♘f1 ♗d8 13 a3 d5 may be a safer way to obtain activity) 12 exd5 ♘xd5 and now 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14 ♖xe5, resembling the Marshall Attack, is more critical than 13 d4 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘f6 15 ♘e5 ♘xe5 16 dxe5 ♕c6 17 ♘f3 ♖ad8 = Bronstein-Smyslov, USSR Ch (Leningrad) 1960.

We now return to 10 d4 *(D)*:



10...♖e8

10...♗b7 – *9...♗b7 10 d4 ♕d7* (Line 4B).

11 a4

11 ♘g5 looks aggressive but actually is easier to deal with if Black knows what to do: 11...♘d8 12 f4 ♗b7! makes it hard for White to complete his development as ♘bd2 will leave the f4-pawn hanging:

a) 13 ♗c2 ♗f8 14 dxe5 dxe5 15 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 16 f5 c5 17 ♗e3 c4 18 ♘d2 ♗c5 ∓ Dvoirys-Malevinsky, Kazan 1980.

b) 13 dxe5 dxe5 and now:

b1) 14 fxe5 ♗c5+ 15 ♔h2 ♕xd1 16 ♖xd1 (16 ♗xd1 ♘d7 ∓) 16...♘xe4 =.

b2) 14 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 15 f5 ♗c5+ 16 ♔h2 ♘f6 and Black was obviously doing well in Paavilainen-Valkesalmi, Finnish Ch (Helsinki) 1990.

11...♗b7 12 ♗g5

White has also tried:

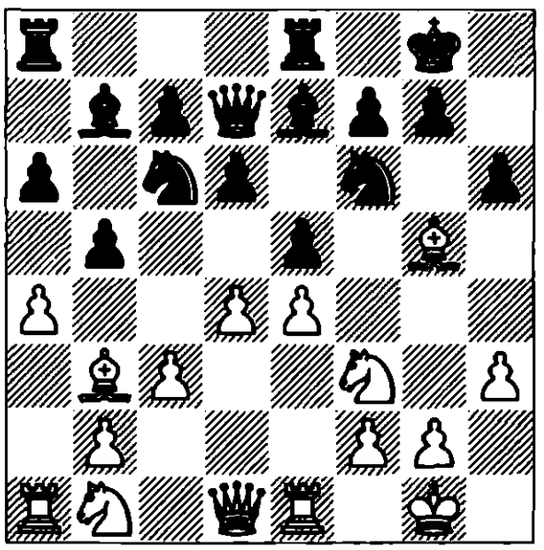
a) 12 dxe5 ♘xe5 13 axb5 ♘xf3+ 14 ♕xf3 axb5 15 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 16 ♘d2 ♗f8 was very comfortable for Black in the game Keres-Smyslov, Bled/Zagreb/Belgrade Ct 1959. Keres can not have been particularly impressed by his own position either, as he chose the clumsy move 17 ♖e3?!, which made things even worse for him.

b) 12 axb5 axb5 13 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 14 ♘a3 ♖b8 15 d5 ♘d8 16 ♗c2 c6 17 dxc6 ♗xc6 18 b4 h6 19 ♗d3 ♘e6 = Sanakoev-I.Zaitsev, Voronezh 1997.

c) 12 ♘bd2 ♗f8 13 axb5 axb5 14 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 15 d5 ♘e7 16 ♘f1 h6 17 ♘g3 c6 18 dxc6 ♗xc6 and Black was doing excellently in Timman-Karpov, Kuala Lumpur Ct (7) 1990 as his influence over the d5-square could hardly be any greater (this game started as a Zaitsev and reached 'our' position via the move-order

9...♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 a4!? ♕d7 12 ♘bd2, etc.).

12...h6 *(D)*



13 axb5

Or:

a) 13 ♗h4 g5!? 14 ♗g3 ♗f8 15 ♘bd2 ♗g7 - *11 ♗g5 h6 12 ♗h4 g5 13 ♗g3 ♗f8 14 ♘bd2 ♗g7 15 a4 ♗b7.*

b) 13 dxe5 ♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 dxe5 15 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 16 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 17 ♘d2 ♘c5 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♖xa8+ ♗xa8 ½-½ Savon-I.Zaitsev, Oriol 1999.

13...axb5 14 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 15 d5

Alternatively:

a) After 15 ♗h4, in addition to 15...g5 16 ♗g3 ♗f8, Black can also consider the quite typical manoeuvre 15...♗d8!?, hoping to activate this bishop on the g1-a7 diagonal further down the road.

b) 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 d5 ♘e7 17 ♘a3 c6 and Black's activity compensates for his small pawn weaknesses.

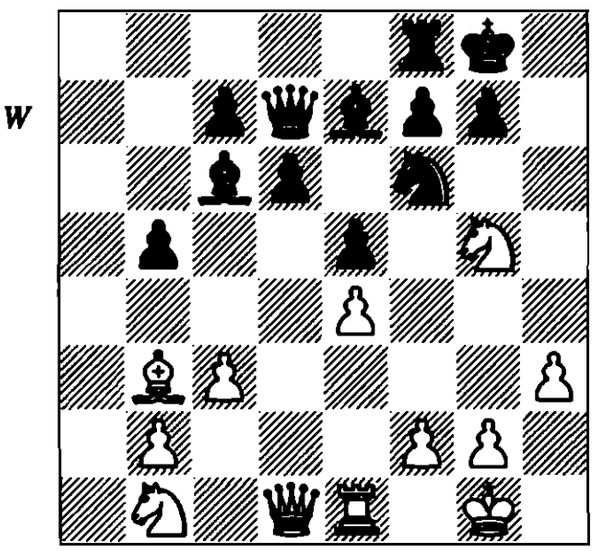
15...hxg5!

This must be stronger than 15...♘a5?!, when Black's misplaced knight gave White a large advantage in the nicely-played game Vasiukov-Malevinsky, Beltsy 1979: 16 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 17 ♗a2 ♗d8 (17...c6!, seeking counterplay before White is able to establish a positional bind, is obligatory) 18 ♘a3 c5 19 b4 ♘b7 20 ♕e2 c4 21 ♘xb5! ♕xb5 22 ♗xc4! ♕b6 23 ♗b5 ♖f8 24 ♖a1 ♗e7 25 ♖a6 ♕c7 26 ♗c6 ♖b8 27 ♖a7 ♕b6 28 ♕a2 ♕d8 29 ♘d2 ♔h7 30 ♘c4 ♗g5 31 ♕e2 g6 32 g3 ♔g7 33 h4 ♗f6 34 ♔g2 h5 35 ♖a6 g5 36 hxg5 ♗xg5 37 ♕xh5 ♕f6 38 ♕g4 ♖h8 39 ♘e3 ♖d8 40 ♘f5+ ♔f8 41 ♖b6 ♗d2 42 ♗xb7 1-0.

16 dxc6 ♗xc6

16...♕xc6!? also seems very playable.

17 ♘xg5 ♖f8 *(D)*



It will take Black some moves to relieve the pressure against f7, but White is not able to increase it, so we believe Black has at least equal chances here.

18 ♘d2

Romanishin and Bykhovsky claim that 18 ♘a3 g6 19 ♘c2 gives White a small advantage, but after 19...♗b7, preparing to meet 20 ♘b4?! with 20...c5, we believe Black is equal.

18...g6 19 ♘df3 ♘h5 20 g3

And not 20 ♗d5?! ♗xd5 21 ♕xd5 ♘f4 ∓.

20...♕d8 21 ♕d2 ♕a8

The position is tense but rather balanced. White should probably avoid ♘xf7 followed by ♘g5 as Black defends with ...♗e8.

Conclusion:

White's rare early alternatives shouldn't worry Black too much. That doesn't imply that Black will find easy equality but with most of the pieces still on the board you should be able to beat inferior opposition.

Part 3: White Ducks the Challenge

Here we shall primarily examine lines where White departs from the main line somewhere after 4...♘f6. With most of the world's top players agreeing that the moves up to 9 h3 represent excellent play for both sides, it may seem irrational for mere mortals to deviate deliberately. However, many players are averse to playing long theoretical lines, and possibly not departing (knowingly or not) from previous games until around move 25. This applies in particular to amateur players with limited time for study and opening preparation. For this group of players it often makes more sense to head for lesser-known lines where natural ability will decide the result.

You will no doubt notice that most of the lines examined here are frequently classified as Anti-Marshall lines. Although our standard move-order (with 7...d6) is perfectly sound and normal, it indeed is true that these slightly toothless lines are more likely to occur as a reaction to 7...0-0 and the prospect of entering the tactical chaos of the Marshall. So if you like to play these lines from Black's side, you could consider adopting that move-order. See the 'Ruy Lopez Overview' for more on the Marshall move-order.

When encountered in an important game, White's deviations from the main lines may appear scary. Some, like the Central Attack (5 d4), are violent – trying to catch an unprepared opponent in complications before the game has even begun. Others, like the Anderssen Variation (6 d3) seek to take the game into a long-term manoeuvring contest where understanding is essential. However, whatever their nature, they are rare for a reason. If you understand an opening's internal logic it should normally not be too difficult to figure out why a certain move is not popular. This is particularly true in a logical and not too tactical opening like the Ruy Lopez.

You will probably find that the lines examined in Chapter 7 are more diverse than those in the previous chapters. Consequently you may draw fewer benefits from what you learned in earlier chapters than you have become used to. Nevertheless, if you know a few main lines well, you should be able to handle any surprise with some good old-fashioned thinking. There is, however, a price: your clock will be ticking away, and in our modern times you probably don't start the game with a large reserve. Therefore we have included fairly detailed chapters on White's departures from the highway. Generally we shall offer less strategic explanation than we do in the main lines, but that simply reflects the fact that in most cases there really aren't any very deep thoughts behind White's moves!

6 Rare 8th and 9th Moves

Having familiarized yourself with the Closed Ruy Lopez main lines, you should by now be well equipped to handle White's deviations on move 8 and 9. Indeed you will find that the great majority of lines considered in this chapter lead to play rather similar to what we have already seen in previous chapters.

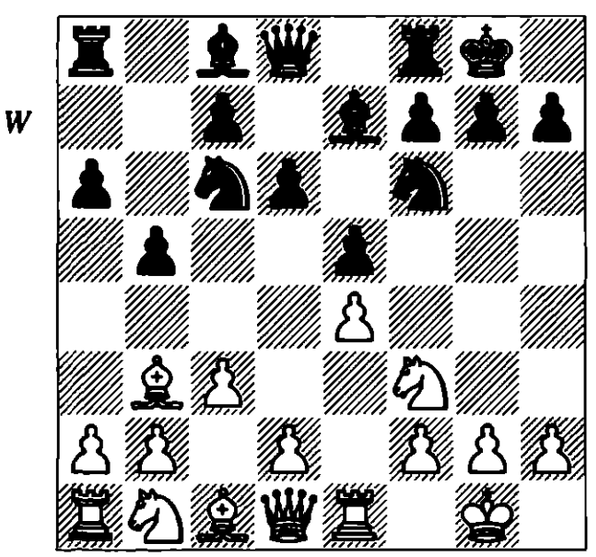
Closed Ruy Lopez Sidelines Overview

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6)

8 c3

With this pawn move, White lays the foundation of his central fortress. Alternatives to this slow build-up can be found in Line 6G.

8...0-0 *(D)*



This is quite an important juncture. Understandably, many players hesitate to play the non-developing move 9 h3 with not only their entire queenside unmoved but also the b1-knight deprived of its 'natural' square. So what we shall see in this chapter are mainly attempts to develop more efficiently.

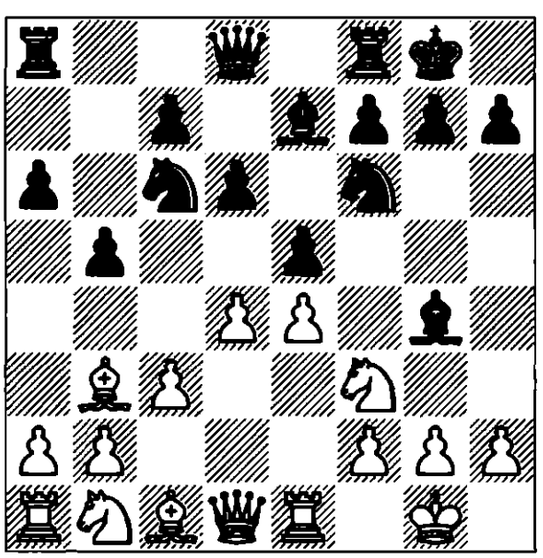
9 d4!?

We may not have researched this matter deeply enough, but it seems that this fairly important opening variation is virtually nameless. Admittedly we have seen it called the Yates Variation, but if you tell an average chessplayer that you won a nice game in the Yates Variation of the Ruy Lopez, he will probably just stare blankly at you.

From time to time this move inspires a flurry of interest, and for the moment is quite fashionable. We expect this to prove only temporary, but it is very tempting to try to do without the non-developing h3. However, in doing so, White breaks another fundamental opening principle, allowing the position to be opened when still behind in development.

For Pilnik's 9 d3 see 6E and for the rare 9 a4, see 6F.

9...♗g4! *(D)*



This pin is the only way to demonstrate the drawbacks to White's immediate central activity. Black doesn't exactly threaten to win a pawn, but the pressure on d4 may force White to retake on f3 with his g-pawn.

10 ♗e3

This natural developing move keeps White's centre fluid and is the favoured move for the moment. The last time 9 d4 was fashionable was after White scored some wins with 10 d5 ♘a5 11 ♗c2 c6 12 h3 ♗d7?! 13 ♘xe5! dxe5 14 d6, gaining the bishop-pair. Instead, 12...♗c8! improves and is considered absolutely fine for

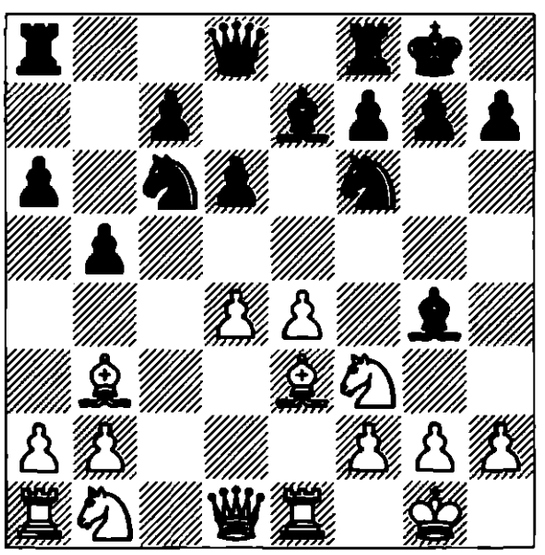
Black. We consider this continuation in Line 6C.

10...exd4

For the intriguing 10...♘xe4!? 11 ♗d5 ♕d7, see the section 'On the Shoulders of Giants' in the Introduction. It is logical for Black to initiate some immediate action in the centre while White is still vulnerable because of his pinned knight. 10...♗h5?! (with ideas such as ...♘g4 and ...♗g6) 11 h3 exd4 12 cxd4 d5 is similar to our main line, but gives White the extra option of 13 g4 ♗g6 14 ♘e5!?, which has scored 0 out of 3 so far, but is probably very good for White!

11 cxd4 *(D)*

B



11...d5!?

We have seen this idea before. Of course Black didn't capture on d4 in order to leave White with two perfect central pawns. Instead he immediately challenges them, forcing a declaration which will inevitably make the pawn-pair lose mobility.

After some discussion, we decided to advocate this straightforward approach. In our opinion the resulting positions are relatively easy to understand and fully sound for Black. We don't claim that it is stronger than Black's most common response, which is 11...♘a5 12 ♗c2 and now either 12...c5 or 12...♘c4 13 ♗c1 c5. It could even be argued that those lines would have a more familiar feel than those arising from 11...d5. However, that argument can easily be turned on its head. While it indeed is our duty to serve the reader a logical repertoire, we are not obliged to limit his chess horizon by providing similar-looking lines wherever available. Our decision was mainly based on practical considerations. The 11...♘a5 lines are many and tend to get a little hazy as both sides have a lot of options in the quiet lines that result.

12 e5

12 exd5 ♘xd5 is obviously fine for Black.

12...♘e4

Now we shall usually get a position reminiscent of the Open Variation (5...♘xe4), with the sole but significant difference that there is a white pawn on d4 (instead of c2 or c3). However, many of the plans and ideas from that variation are still feasible. Among the ideas that Black can borrow from the Open Variation is ...f5 to support the e4-knight. Another idea is the manoeuvre ...♗h5-g6 and after the exchange of the light-squared bishops on that square, the apparently paradoxical recapture ...fxg6 – compare Alekhine-Rubinstein in the Introduction. Also the blockading ...♘d8-e6, which as a bonus frees the black c-pawn, is frequently seen in the Open Variation (although there it is normally the other knight that lands on e6).

Chapter Guide

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 (8 c3 0-0 9 d4 ♗g4 10 ♗e3 exd4 11 cxd4 d5 12 e5 ♘e4)

Line 6A: 13 h3 134
Line 6B: (13 ♘c3) 137
Line 6C: 10 d5 139
Line 6D: (10 a4!?) 141
Line 6E: 9 d3 143
Line 6F: (9 a4) 148
Line 6G: (8 a4) 151

6A: 13 h3

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 d4 ♗g4 10 ♗e3 exd4 11 cxd4 d5 12 e5 ♘e4)

13 h3 *(D)*

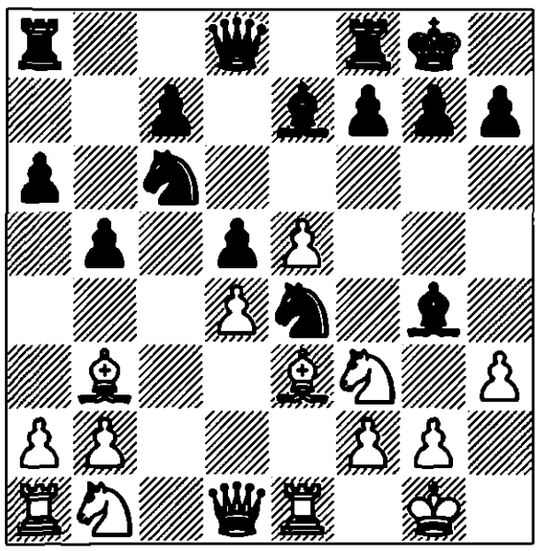
This move forces a declaration from the bishop, which is probably useful for White. Alternatives will be explored in Line 6B.

13...♗h5 14 ♘c3

The knight on e4 is quite dominant and it is natural to remove it with this move. The following alternatives look risky but have been played by some strong players:

a) 14 ♘bd2?! ♘xd2 and now:

a1) 15 ♗xd2? simply blunders in view of 15...♘xd4; e.g., 16 g4 ♘xb3 17 ♕xb3 ♗g6 18



♗a5 ♕d7 19 ♖ad1 c6 ∓ A.Jensen-L.Kovacs, Copenhagen 1982.

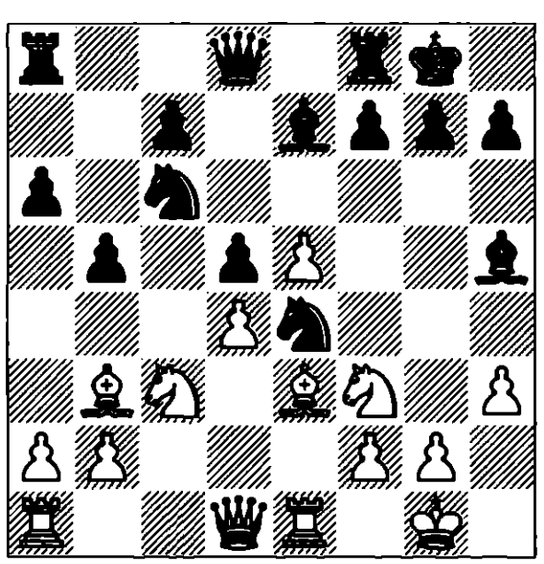
a2) 15 ♕xd2 is possible, as 15...♗xf3 16 gxf3 ♗b4 can be met by 17 ♕c2. However, after 17...♘a5! (17...♗xe1 18 ♕xc6, with good compensation, was White's point) 18 ♖ec1 ♘c4!? Black looks very healthy.

b) The complications initiated by 14 g4 ♗g6 15 ♘h2 ♗b4 seem, if anything, to be in Black's favour:

b1) 16 f3 ♗xe1 17 ♕xe1 ♘g5 18 ♘c3 ♘e6 19 ♗xd5 ♘cxd4 20 ♖d1 c5 ∓ Van der Wiel-Timman, Tilburg 1983.

b2) 16 ♖e2 promises White nothing after 16...f5 17 f3 ♘g3 18 ♖g2 f4 19 ♘c3 ♔h8 20 ♗f2 (20 ♗xd5 ♗e8! and White has to part with his bishop) 20...♘a5 21 ♘xd5 ♘xb3 22 ♕xb3 ♘e2+ 23 ♔f1 ♘g3+ 24 ♔g1 ♘e2+ 25 ♔f1 ½-½ Yudasin-Tseshkovsky, USSR Ch (Frunze) 1981. Taking on g3 would be positional capitulation, conceding all the dark squares; hence the repetition.

We now return to 14 ♘c3 *(D)*:



14...♘xc3

The old line 14...♗b4 suffered a serious setback in Gormally-Hebden, Hastings 2003/4, where White came up with the exchange sacrifice 15 ♘xd5! ♗xe1 16 ♕xe1, which later practice has confirmed to be good for White.

15 bxc3 ♕d7

This sound move connects the rooks and frees the d8-square for the typical manoeuvre ...♘d8-e6. In addition, by eyeing the kingside in general and h3 in particular, Black makes it less likely that White can meet ...♗xf3 with gxf3.

Some recent games have cast doubt on 15...♘a5. After 16 ♗c2 ♘c4 17 g4 ♗g6, White has the typical 18 ♗f5!, clamping down on the kingside. While this may still be theoretically sound for Black (a quick ...a5 and ...b4 is called for), we are reluctant to recommend it as White's score in practice is crushing.

16 ♗f4

This is possible now that the d-pawn is safely protected.

a) 16 g4 ♗g6 17 ♘d2 runs into 17...f5!; e.g., 18 ♕f3 ♖ad8 19 ♕g3 ♘a5 20 ♗f4 ♕e6 and now 21 g5 was a clear admission that something had gone wrong in Arencibia-Servat, Matanzas 1995. After 21...c5 Black has a clear advantage. Black's pawn-majority on the queenside is mobile and intimidating, while the same cannot be said about White's on the kingside.

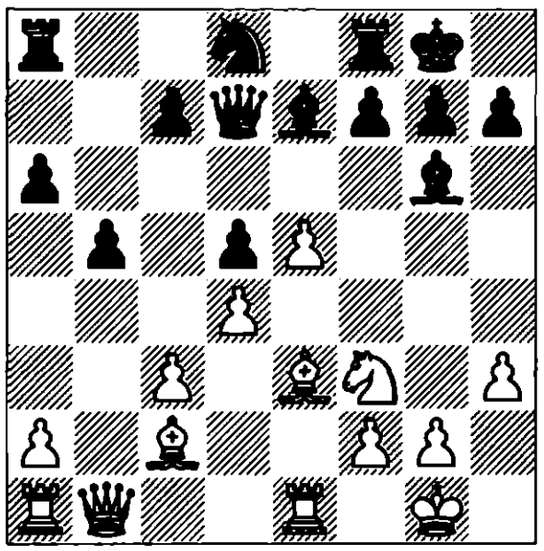
b) 16 ♗c2 is a major option:

b1) 16...f5!? 17 exf6 (17 a4 b4 18 ♗d2 ♘d8 19 cxb4 ♘e6 20 ♗c3 ♘g5 21 ♕d3 ♗xf3 22 gxf3 ♘xh3+ 23 ♔f1 ♗h4 24 ♗d2 ♘xf2 25 ♕b3 ♘e4 ∓ Trani-Cadman, corr. 2000) 17...♗xf6 18 ♕d3 ♗g6 19 ♕d2 ♗e4 20 ♗xe4 dxe4 21 ♘h2 ♘a5 22 ♕c2 ♖ae8 worked fine for Black in Panchenko-I.Sokolov, Palma de Mallorca 1989.

b2) 16...♘d8 is the main move, but as it appears to give White (slightly) the better prospects, Black may want to take a closer look at line 'b1'.

b21) 17 ♖b1 doesn't offer much: 17...♘e6 18 g4 ♗g6 19 ♗f5 (19 ♗xg6? fxg6!) 19...a5 20 ♕d3 ♖ab8 21 ♔h2 ♕c6 22 h4 h5 23 ♖g1 ♕c4 24 ♕c2 b4 25 gxh5 (25 ♗xg6? fxg6 26 ♕xg6 ♖b6! is almost winning for Black) 25...♗xh5 ∓ Ganguly-Kurnosov, Moscow 2005.

b22) 17 ♕b1 ♗g6 *(D)* is the critical line. Now White has these options:



b221) 18 ♘d2 c5 19 f4 cxd4 20 cxd4 ♗xc2 21 ♕xc2 ♖c8 22 ♕d3 was Herrera-R.Hernandez, Santa Clara 1999 and here we recommend 22...♘c6 23 a3 (to prevent ...♘b4) and now the typical 23...f5!, hampering White's kingside majority; e.g., 24 exf6 ♗xf6 25 ♘f3 ♘a5 and we prefer Black.

b222) 18 ♗g5 ♘e6 19 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 20 a4 c6 and now:

b2221) 21 ♖a2?! appears very artificial: 21...♖fb8 22 ♖b2 (22 ♗xg6 hxg6 23 ♕b4 c5!? 24 dxc5 a5 25 ♕b3 ♕xc5 =) 22...♕a3 23 ♕c1?! (23 ♗xg6 hxg6 24 ♖a2 ♕xc3 25 ♖c1 ♕a5 26 ♖xc6 bxa4 =) 23...♗xc2 24 ♕xc2 ♕xa4 25 ♕xa4 bxa4 26 ♖xb8+ ♖xb8 27 ♖a1 ♖b3 28 ♖xa4 ♖xc3 29 ♖xa6 and now an instructive sequence: 29...g5! 30 ♖a1 ♔g7 31 ♖e1 h5 ∓ Milman-Onishchuk, USA Ch (San Diego) 2004.

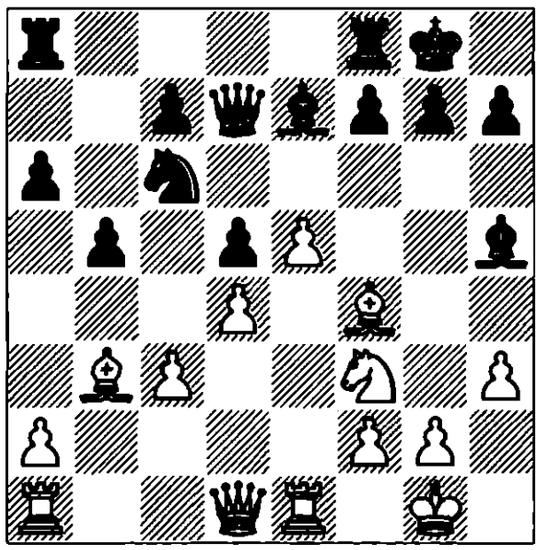
b2222) Initially 21 ♗xg6 fxg6 looked very satisfactory to us from Black's perspective, but there are concrete problems after 22 ♕b4!; e.g., 22...♕xb4 (this leads to a slightly worse endgame, but 22...♕d7 runs into the strong 23 ♕d6!) 23 cxb4 ±. Unfortunately, the tempting 23...♖xf3!? doesn't quite solve all the problems: 24 gxf3 ♘xd4 25 ♖ed1 ♘xf3+ 26 ♔g2 ♖f8 (26...♘xe5 27 axb5 cxb5 28 ♖xd5 ±) 27 e6 ±.

We now return to 16 ♗f4 *(D)*:

16...♘d8

This is the typical knight manoeuvre. The knight is comfortable on e6, putting pressure on White's centre and planning a later ...c5. However, the more active plan 16...♘a5 17 ♗c2 ♘c4 also works very well for Black; e.g.:

a) 18 g4 ♗g6 19 ♗xg6 fxg6 20 e6 ♕c6 21 ♗g3 ♖ae8 ∓ Pugachov-Polovodin, Podolsk 1993.



b) 18 ♕d3 ♗g6 19 ♕e2 ♗xc2 20 ♕xc2 h6 21 ♖e2 a5 22 ♖ae1 ♖a6 23 ♘h2 b4 24 ♘g4 ♕e6 25 ♗c1 ♕g6 26 cxb4 axb4 27 ♕b3 c5 ∓ Stald-Koskivirta, corr. 1986.

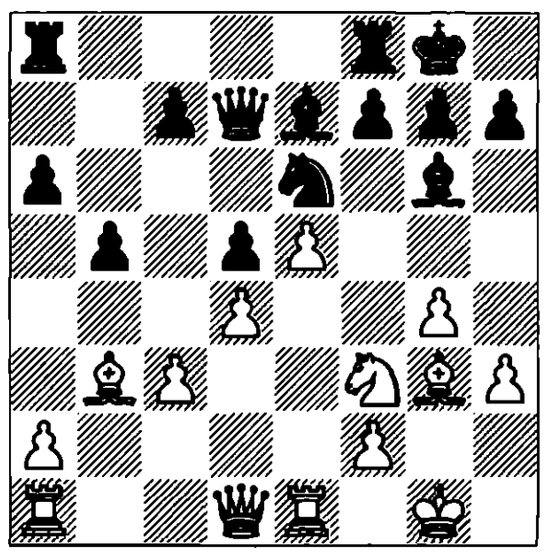
c) White doesn't seem to achieve much with 18 ♕b1!? ♔h8 (18...♘a3? 19 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 20 ♕d3 ♗xf3 21 ♗f5 ♗e4 22 ♕xe4 dxe4 23 ♗xd7 ±) 19 ♗f5 ♕c6 20 ♕d3.

d) 18 ♗g3 ♕e6 19 ♕d3 ♗g6 20 ♕e2 ♖ae8 21 ♘h2 c5 22 ♗xg6 ♕xg6 (22...fxg6! ∓) 23 ♖ad1 cxd4 24 ♖xd4 ♗c5?! (Haag-Nei, Zinnowitz 1966; 24...♕e6) 25 ♖xd5 ♕xg3 26 ♖xc5 ♕xc3 27 ♘f3 =.

17 g4 ♘e6

17...♗g6 18 ♗g3 ♘e6 – *17...♘e6 18 ♗g3 ♗g6.*

18 ♗g3 ♗g6 *(D)*



19 ♘h4

19 ♗c2 ♗xc2 20 ♕xc2 c5 21 ♕d3 ♖fc8 22 ♘d2 cxd4 23 cxd4 ♗b4 ∓ Leventić-Blagojević, Yugoslav Ch (Kladovo) 1991.

19...c5 20 ♘f5 cxd4 21 cxd4 ♖ac8

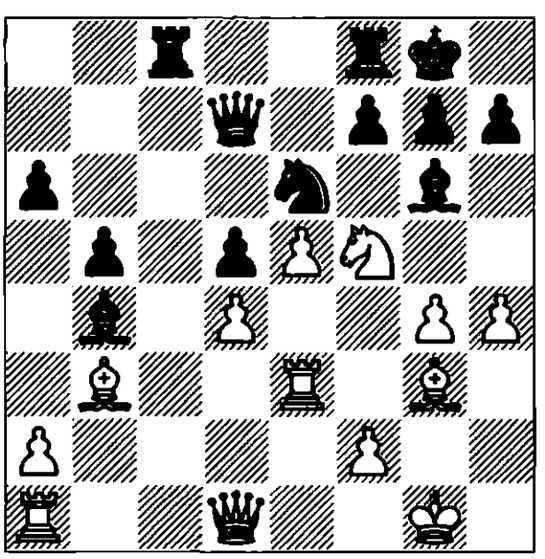
Black's position is slightly cramped, but we believe this is fully balanced by the fact that he is about to develop serious counterplay on the queenside by ...♗b4-c3, putting a question to the d4-pawn.

Conclusion:
This line works very well for Black at the moment. It bears a similarity to the Open Variation of the Ruy Lopez and lots of the typical procedures from that line are valid here as well. At move 16, it seems that both ...♘d8-e6 and the more active plan with ...♘a5-c4 are fully satisfactory for Black.

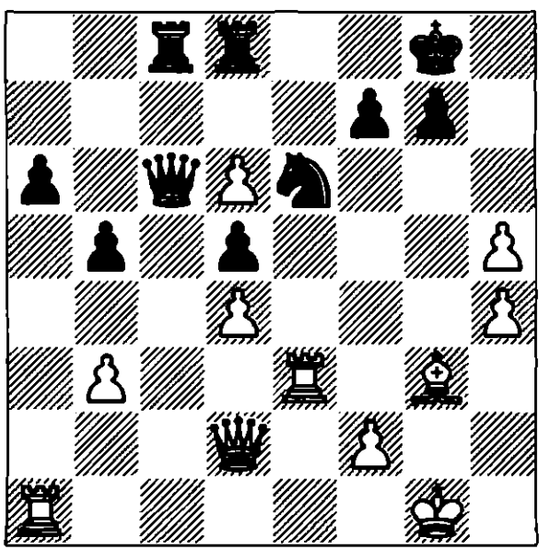
Illustrative Game 15

Timofeev – Lastin
Russian Ch (Sochi) 2005

22 h4 ♗b4 23 ♖e3 *(D)*



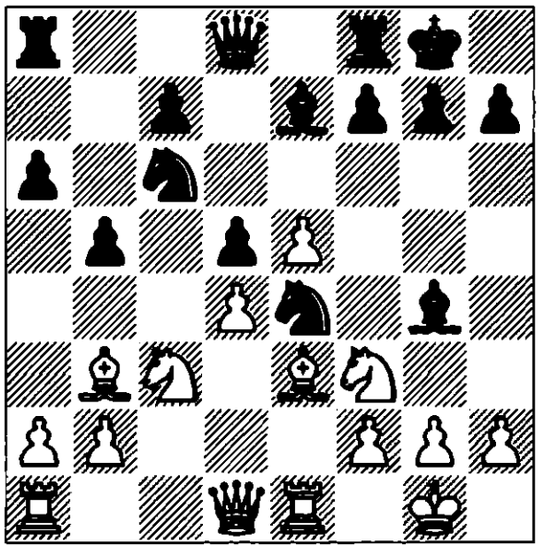
23...h5?!
This is unnecessarily weakening.
a) 23...♗c3 24 ♖c1 ♗b2 25 ♖b1 ♗xd4 26 ♖d3 h5 27 ♘xd4 ♘c5 28 ♗c2 ♘xd3 29 ♗xd3 ♗xd3 30 ♕xd3 ♕xg4 31 ♘f5 ±.
b) 23...h6 24 h5 ♗h7 25 ♘d6 ♗c3 (after 25...♗xd6 26 exd6 White has an initiative) 26 ♖c1 ♗xd4 27 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 28 ♖f3 ♖f8 =.
24 ♘d6 ♗xd6
24...♗c3 25 ♖c1 ♗xd4 26 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 is more complicated, but 27 gxh5! ♗xe3 28 ♘xc8 ♗e4 29 ♘d6 ♗d4 30 h6! gives White a large advantage.
25 exd6 ♕c6?!
25...♗e4 26 f3 ♗g6 27 ♗xd5 ±.
26 gxh5 ♗c2 27 ♕d2 ♗xb3 28 axb3 ♖fd8?! *(D)*
The alternatives 28...♖fe8 29 h6 gxh6 30 ♕d3 and 28...♕d7 29 h6 gxh6 30 ♖e5 allow Black to fight on from an inferior position.

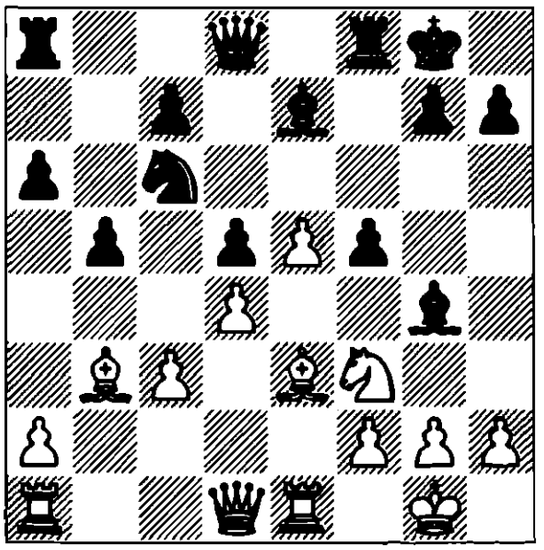


29 h6!
This advance definitely decides the struggle in White's favour.
29...♕c2
29...gxh6 30 ♖xe6 fxe6 31 ♕xh6 ♕b7 (or 31...♖xd6 32 ♗e5! +–) 32 ♖xa6! is also winning for White.
30 ♕xc2 ♖xc2 31 hxg7 ♘xd4 32 ♗e5 ♘f5 33 ♗f6! 1-0
(Comments based on René Olthof's survey in *NIC Yearbook 76.*)

6B: 13 ♘c3 and Rare 13th Moves

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 d4 ♗g4 10 ♗e3 exd4 11 cxd4 d5 12 e5 ♘e4)
13 ♘c3 *(D)*
This immediate development of the knight allows Black some extra options compared to Line 6A. It is, however, far from clear that Black should make use of these.
13 ♘bd2 should be compared with *13 h3 ♗h5 14 ♘bd2?!* (see Line 6A) and is nothing Black should lose sleep over: 13...♘xd2 14 ♕xd2 ♗xf3 15 gxf3 ♗b4 16 ♕c2 ♘a5 (but not 16...♗xe1? 17 ♕xc6) 17 ♖e2 ♕d7 18 ♗d2 ♗xd2 19 ♕xd2 ♘xb3 20 axb3 ♕f5 21 ♕e3 ♖fe8 22 ♔h1 ♖e6 23 ♖g1 h6 24 f4 a5 and Black was better in I.Zaitsev-Leonidov, Voronezh 1997.
13...♘xc3


B


W

The old line 13...♗b4?! seems to be in trouble these days due to 14 ♘xe4! dxe4 15 ♕c2 exf3 16 ♕xc6 ♗xe1 17 ♖xe1, when White has a dangerous initiative for the exchange. In Sadvakasov-Graf, Mainz rpd 2004 he went on to win.

14 bxc3 f5!?

Black's point is that now (without h3 and ...♗h5), 15 exf6? is bad because after 15...♖xf6! White's pawn-structure on the kingside will inevitably be wrecked.

Mihail Marin, a renowned authority on the Open Ruy Lopez, has this to say about the position: "...f5 does not solve all Black's problems. The strong passed e5-pawn remains White's main trump. The position is very unbalanced strategically and not easy to assess. In order to reach relative safety, Black should block the queenside as well, with either ...♗a3 or ...a5-a4. This would prevent a4 and allow him to concentrate on blocking the e-pawn and consolidating the crucial f5-square."

14...♕d7 normally transposes to Line 6A after 15 h3 ♗h5, but White may omit h3. An example is 15 ♗c2 ♗h5 16 ♕b1 ♗g6 17 a4 ♖ab8 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♗g5 ♗xc2 20 ♕xc2 ♘d8 21 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 22 ♕b3 ♕d7 23 ♘h4 ♘e6 = Korneev-Blagojević, Arco 2003.

We now return to 14...f5 *(D)*:

15 ♕c1!?

This to some extent forces matters. Black now must take his chance to damage White's pawn-structure.

a) 15 a4 ♘a5 is fine for Black:

a1) 16 ♗a2 ♘c4 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♗xc4 bxc4 19 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 20 h3 ♗h5 21 e6 ♗d6 22 ♗d2 ♕e8 23 ♕e2 f4 24 ♗c1 ♕e7 25 ♕a2 h6 ∓ T.Clarke-Hebden, Edinburgh 1989.

a2) 16 ♗c2 ♘c4 17 ♗c1 (17 axb5!?) 17...b4! gives Black the initiative: 18 ♕d3 bxc3 19 ♕xc3 a5 20 ♕d3 ♗b4 21 ♖d1 ♖a6 22 h3 ♗h5 23 ♗b3 ♖c6 24 ♗g5 ♕d7 25 ♖ac1 ♕e6 26 ♕e2 f4 ∓ Hinks Edwards-Hebden, Port Erin 2002.

b) 15 ♗f4 is solid but no problem for Black: 15...♘a5 16 ♗c2 ♘c4 17 ♕d3 a5 18 e6 c6 19 ♘e5 ♘xe5 20 ♗xe5 a4! (stopping any a4 ideas from White and stabilizing the queenside) 21 h3 ♗h5 22 ♕g3 ♗g6 23 ♖e2 ♗h4 24 ♕f3 ♗e7 25 ♖ae1 ♖a7 26 ♗f4 ♕e8 27 ♕g3 ♕d8 28 ♕f3 ♕e8 29 ♕g3 ½-½ A.Kovačević-Blagojević, Budva 2003. Neither side can make any progress.

15...♗xf3 16 gxf3 ♘a5 17 ♗d1 ♘c4

Now White should create play on the queenside with 18 a4!, after which he might still have hopes of an opening advantage. We see the consequences of the less accurate 18 f4 in our illustrative game below.

Conclusion:

Leaving out h3 and ...♗h5 gives Black the extra possibility 14...f5!?, but we are not convinced Black should make use of it. There are obvious strategic risks involved with the pawn advance – primarily that it gives White a protected passed pawn on e5. See Marin's remarks above.

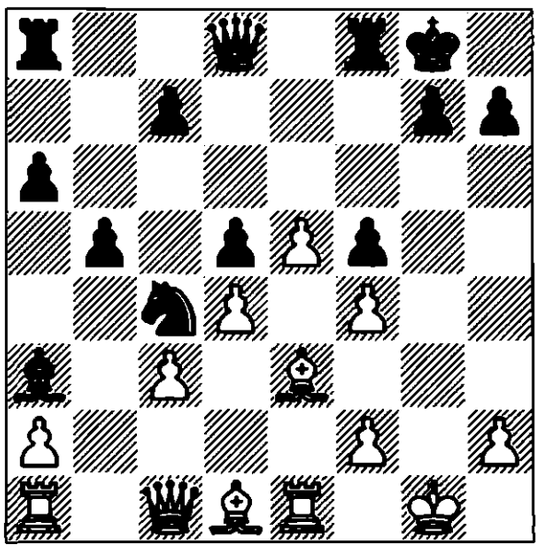
Illustrative Game 16

Grishchuk – Short
Wijk aan Zee 2005

18 f4

We believe the further course of the game indicates that after this move Black has all the fun.

18...♗a3! *(D)*



This is the point, cementing the queenside for a long time. White is now left without pawn-breaks at all and not much scope for his bishops. Black is better.

19 ♕c2 ♕h4 20 ♗f3 c6 21 ♔h1 ♖ae8 22 ♖g1 ♖e6 23 ♖g2 ♖h6 24 ♖ag1 ♖f7 25 ♗e2 ♕h3 26 ♗xc4 bxc4?!

26...dxc4! 27 ♕d1 ♕h5 28 d5 ♕xd1 29 ♖xd1 cxd5 30 ♖xd5 ♖c6 with the idea ...♖b7 and ...b4 leaves Black slightly better.

27 ♖b1 ♗f8 28 ♔g1

28 ♕e2 ♕h5 29 f3 was given in various sources, with advantage to White because of Black's weakness on a6.

28...♖e7 29 ♖b8 ♖ee6 30 ♕b2 ♖eg6 31 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 32 ♕b8+ ♔e7 33 ♕c7+ ♔e8 34 ♕c8+ ♔e7 ½-½

(Comments based on Mihail Marin's survey in *NIC Yearbook 78.*)

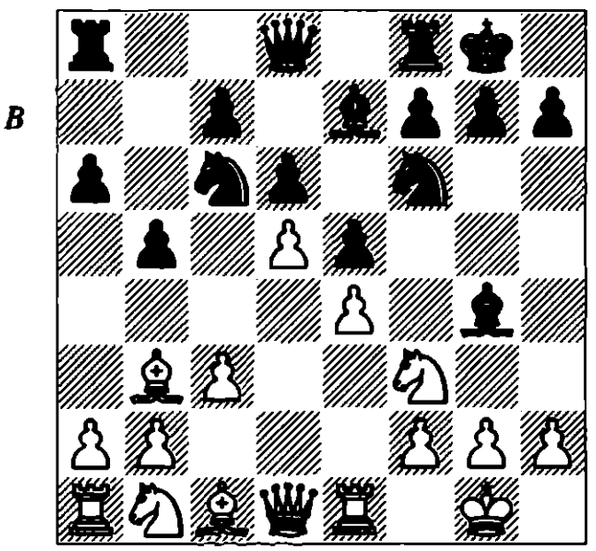
6C: 9 d4 ♗g4 10 d5

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 d4 ♗g4)

10 d5 *(D)*

To the inexperienced player, White's opening play must seem like the perfect solution: first White saves that little rook's pawn move, and then he secures his central space advantage while gaining time on a knight which moreover has to move to the edge of the board.

Still, as we explained in the Introduction, the thrust d5 is a concession on White's part. He relieves the tension in the centre too early and this facilitates Black's task: now he shall play for the ...c6 break with all his might.



10...♘a5

It is important not to allow White time to consolidate his space advantage.

11 ♗c2

By now you might think that this automatic retreat doesn't really deserve a comment. And maybe we would have passed it over if it weren't for the fact that players like Vasiukov and Suetin have played 11 h3. Now 11...♗c8 may be the choice for the practical player (12 ♗c2 c6 – *11 ♗c2 c6 12 h3 ♗c8*). The more principled line 11...♘xb3 12 axb3 ♗d7 13 c4 c6 14 dxc6 ♗xc6 leads to roughly balanced play, and Suetin-Kondratiev, Olomouc 1975 was agreed drawn after 15 ♘c3 b4 16 ♘d5 ♘xd5 17 cxd5 ♗b5 18 ♗e3 ♕d7 19 ♕d2 a5 20 ♖ec1 ♗d8 21 ♘h2.

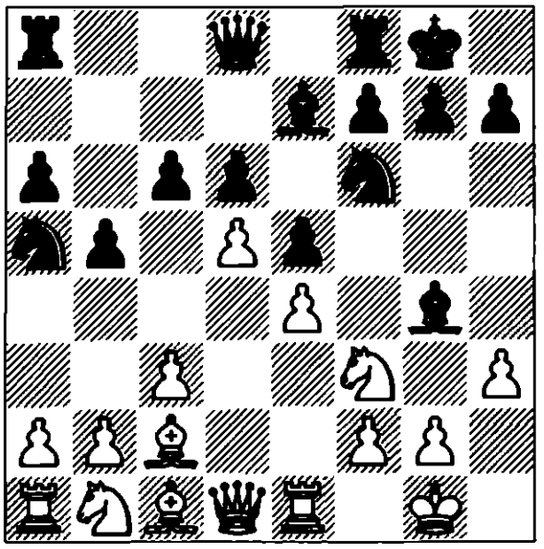
11...c6

Originally we were planning to recommend 11...♕c8 here, but the game Nayer-Akopian, Russian Cht (Sochi) 2006 made us change our minds: 12 ♘bd2 c6 13 b4! ♘b7 14 dxc6 ♕xc6 15 ♗b2 ♘d8 (Black's problem is that both his knight and bishop need rapid access to the e6-square) 16 ♘f1 ♘e6 17 h3 ♗h5 (or 17...♗xf3 18 ♕xf3 ♖fe8 19 ♘g3 ♖ac8 20 ♘f5 ♘f4 21 a4 ♗f8 ±) 18 ♘g3 ♗g6 19 ♘h4 ♖fd8 20 ♘gf5 ♗f8 21 ♕f3 ±. Black's g6-bishop doesn't have a bright future.

12 h3 *(D)*

12 dxc6 poses Black fewer problems; for example, 12...♕c7 13 ♘bd2 ♕xc6 14 h3 ♗e6 15 ♘g5 ♗d7 16 ♕e2 h6 17 ♘gf3 ♖fc8 18 ♘f1 ♗e6 19 ♗d3 ♘b7 20 ♘g3 ♘c5 21 ♗c2 ♗f8 22 ♘h2 ♖e8 23 ♗e3 d5 24 exd5 ♗xd5 25 ♘g4 ♘cd7 26 f3 e4 and Black had seized the initiative in Stein-Geller, USSR Ch (Leningrad) 1971.

B



12...♗c8!

This is the key move. Primarily Black avoids the tactical motif demonstrated by the line 12...♗d7?! 13 ♘xe5! dxe5 14 d6!, which is generally considered advantageous for White. 12...♗xf3!? 13 ♕xf3 cxd5 14 exd5 ♘c4 15 ♘d2 ♘b6 16 ♘f1 ♘bxd5 17 ♘g3 is an interesting line, when White is supposed to have good compensation for the pawn. The latest example is Adams-Nikolić, Dutch Cht 2006, but as the main line appears completely safe, we see no reason to delve into such complications.

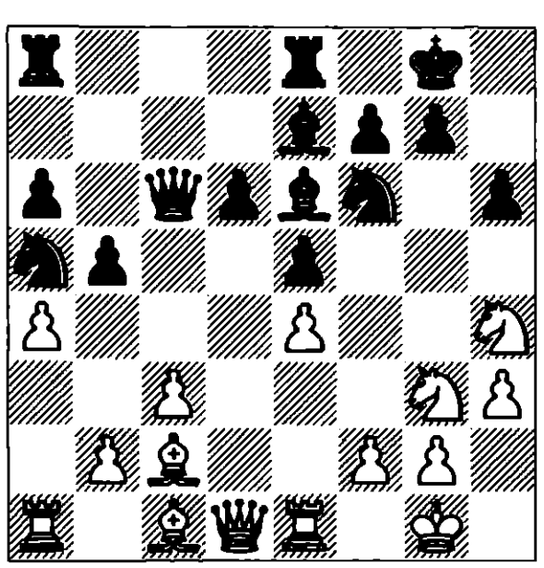
13 dxc6 ♕c7

We have seen this idea before. Black prepares to capture on c6 with the queen, increasing his control of the vital d5-square. 13...♘xc6 is weaker: 14 ♘bd2 ♗b7 15 ♘f1 ♘b8 16 ♘g3 ♖e8 17 a4, when White had a small advantage in Nunn-Godoy, Haifa OL 1976.

14 ♘bd2

Another try is 14 a4 ♕xc6 15 ♘bd2 ♗e6 16 ♘g5 ♗d7 17 ♘f1 h6 18 ♘f3 ♗e6 19 ♘g3 ♖fe8 20 ♘h4 *(D)*, when Black has a choice:

B

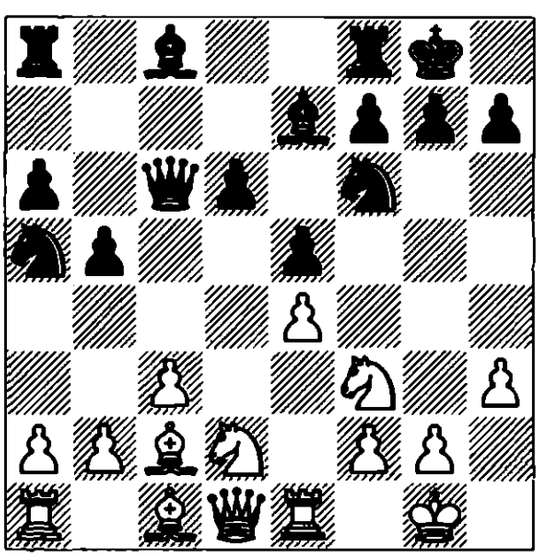


a) 20...♘c4 21 ♘hf5 ♗f8 22 ♕f3 ♘h7 23 ♘h5 ♔h8 24 ♕g3? (too optimistic) 24...g6! 25 b3 (25 ♘xh6 ♘xb2! is no improvement for White) 25...♘b6 26 ♘xh6 bxa4 27 bxa4 ♗xh6 28 ♗xh6 ♖g8 and Black won material and later the game in Perez Candelario-Van den Doel, Kusadasi Ech 2006.

b) 20...♔h8 21 ♘hf5 ♗f8 22 ♕f3 ♘g8! (as always Karpov is very instructive; this demonstrates a typical way to dislodge a white knight from f5 – Black plans ...g6, when the h6-pawn is not hanging any more) 23 ♘e3 ♘b3 24 ♗xb3 ♗xb3 25 ♘d5 ♕b7 26 ♗e3 ♗xd5! 27 exd5 g6! and Black was better in Mäki-Karpov, Helsinki simul 1989. He plans to set his pawn-majority in motion with ...f5.

14...♕xc6 *(D)*

W



Play has again turned into a struggle for control over d5.

15 ♘f1

Nor does 15 ♕e2 promise any advantage: 15...♗e6 16 ♘g5 ♗d7 17 ♘f1 h6 18 ♘f3 ♗e6 19 ♘g3 ♖fe8 20 ♘h4 d5 21 exd5 ♗xd5 22 ♘gf5 ♗f8 = Conquest-Grishchuk, Batumi Echt 1999.

15...♘c4

A recent heavyweight battle went 15...♗e6 16 ♘g3 ♖fe8 17 ♘h4 (this decentralization begs for a counter-stroke in the centre) 17...d5! 18 exd5 ♗xd5 19 ♖xe5 ♘c4 20 ♖e2 ♗c5 21 a4 ♖ad8 and Black had excellent compensation *à la* Marshall in Kamsky-Grishchuk, Khanty-Mansiisk WCup 2005. The game continued 22 axb5 axb5 23 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 24 ♗g5?! (24 ♕e2 ♕xe2 25 ♘xe2 ♗e4! provides sufficient compensation for Black) 24...h6 25 ♗xf6 ♗xf2+! 26

♔xf2 ♕e3+ 27 ♔f1 ♘d2+ 28 ♕xd2 ♕xd2 29 ♗xd8 ♕xc2 ∓.

16 ♘g3 ♖e8 17 a4

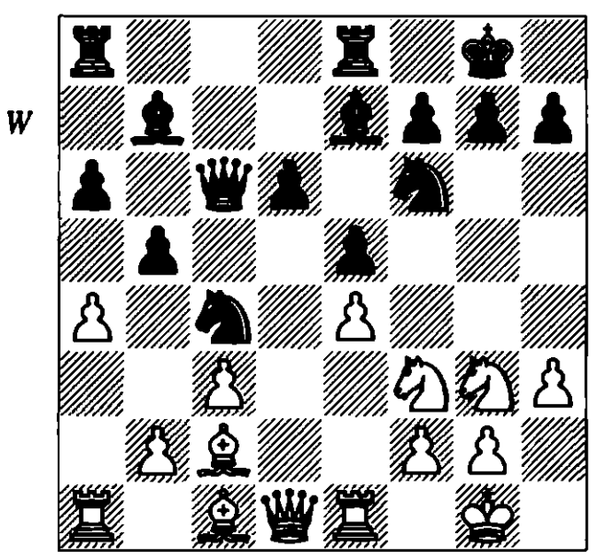
After 17 ♕e2 h6 18 ♗d3 ♗e6 19 ♘h2 d5! Wedberg comments: "White seems to have nothing after this. If a well-timed ...d5 solves Black's problems this easily, 9 d4 shouldn't scare anyone." After 20 ♘g4 ♘xg4 there are:

a) 21 hxg4 ♘d6 22 ♗d2 dxe4 23 ♘xe4 ♗d5 24 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 25 ♗e4 ♖ad8 ½-½ Movsesian-Svidler, Bermuda 2003.

b) Wedberg gives 21 exd5!? ♗xd5 22 ♕xg4, when at first White's activity on the kingside might seem intimidating. However, we believe that after a few accurate defensive moves Black is fine even here: 22...♗f8! 23 ♘f5 ♔h8! and Black has no problems.

17...♗b7 *(D)*

Although ...♗e6 is often our recommendation in such positions, the text-move has been preferred in practice in this concrete instance.



18 ♗d3

Here 18 b3 ♘b6 19 a5 is met comfortably with 19...♘bd7 and after 20 ♗d2, Black should pay serious attention to the immediate advance 20...d5!?.

18...♗f8 19 ♕e2 d5!

This move must always be checked carefully, but when it works, it normally solves all of Black's problems. That seems to be the case here.

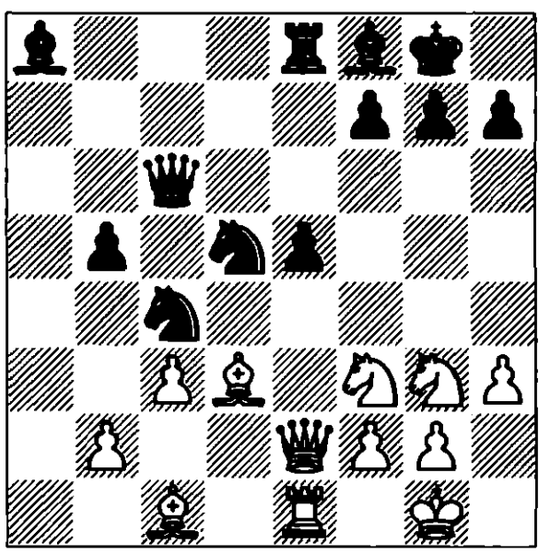
Conclusion:

10 d5 is not a serious threat to Black at the time of writing. There are a lot of variations, but if Black remembers the 12...♗c8! finesse and then fights for control over d5, he shouldn't face any great challenges.

Illustrative Game 17

Timman – Spassky
Montreal 1979

20 axb5 axb5 21 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 22 exd5 ♘xd5 *(D)*



23 ♘f5

After 23 ♗xc4?! bxc4 24 ♘xe5? ♕c7! White cannot get out of the pin on the e-file and must lose material.

23...e4 24 ♗xe4 ♘xc3! 25 bxc3 ♖xe4

This leads to a simplified position where Black, if anybody, is nominally better.

26 ♕xe4 ♕xe4 27 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 28 ♘5d4 b4 29 ♘d2 ♘xd2 30 ♗xd2 bxc3 31 ♗xc3 ½-½

6D: 9 d4 ♗g4 10 a4 and Rare 10th Moves

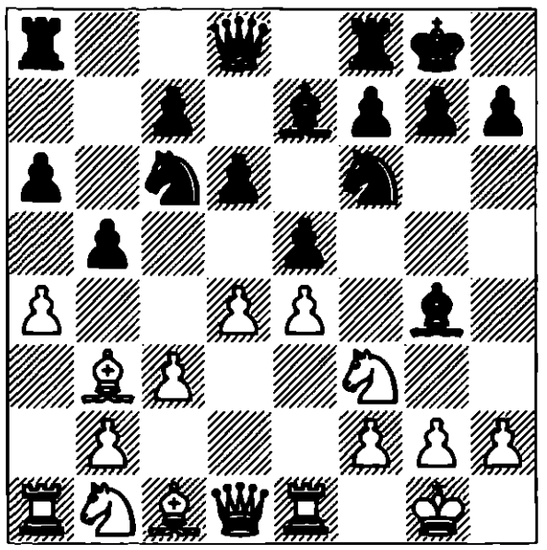
(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 d4 ♗g4)

10 a4!? *(D)*

This challenging move was popularized by Short, who played it in two games. The rarer alternatives are easily dealt with:

a) 10 h3?! ♗xf3 11 ♕xf3 exd4 12 ♕d1 dxc3 13 ♘xc3 ♘a5 14 ♗c2 c5 15 f4 b4 16 ♘d5 ♘xd5 17 ♕xd5 ♗f6 ∓ Khairullin-P.Smirnov, Krasnoiarsk 2003.

b) 10 ♕d3?! ♗xf3 11 gxf3 ♘a5 12 f4 ♘xb3 13 axb3 ♘d7 14 ♘a3 exd4 15 cxd4 c5 16 d5 ♗f6 17 ♘c2 ♖e8 18 b4 c4 19 ♕d1 a5 ∓ Tolush-Bronstein, USSR Ch (Riga) 1958.



10...♕d7

This is the pragmatic choice. Other continuations:

a) 10...♗xf3 11 gxf3 is naturally the critical test, but when examining these lines closely we concluded that White's practical chances were excellent; e.g., 11...♘a5 12 ♗a2 (12 ♗c2 was chosen in Short-Ivanchuk, Moscow rpd 1994, but it seems worse) and now:

a1) 12...♘h5?!, trying to clamp down on the f4-square after ...♗g5, is tempting but typically runs into 13 f4! ♘xf4 14 ♗xf4 exf4 15 ♘d2, when White has a perfect centre and continues with moves like b4 and ♕f3 with excellent chances.

a2) 12...c5?! 13 ♘a3 ♕b8 14 f4 and White had grabbed the initiative in Short-I.Sokolov, Hoogeveen 2004.

b) 10...♕c8!? is a recent refinement from Sashikiran that deserves attention, keeping the d7-square available for the bishop in some variations and avoiding the pin on the d-file: 11 ♗e3 ♘a5 12 ♗a2 c5 13 ♘bd2 (maybe it is worth inserting 13 h3 ♗h5 here) 13...♕c7 14 axb5 axb5 15 h3 ♗d7 16 ♗g5 (16 d5 c4!, intending ...♘b7-c5, is clearly OK for Black) 16...c4 17 ♘f1 and after the timely exchange 17...exd4! 18 ♘xd4 (18 cxd4 ♘c6 intending ...♘b4 is no improvement from White's viewpoint) 18...♘b7 it was clear that Black was in the driving seat in Naiditsch-Sashikiran, Sarajevo 2006. The pin on the a-file is especially awkward for White.

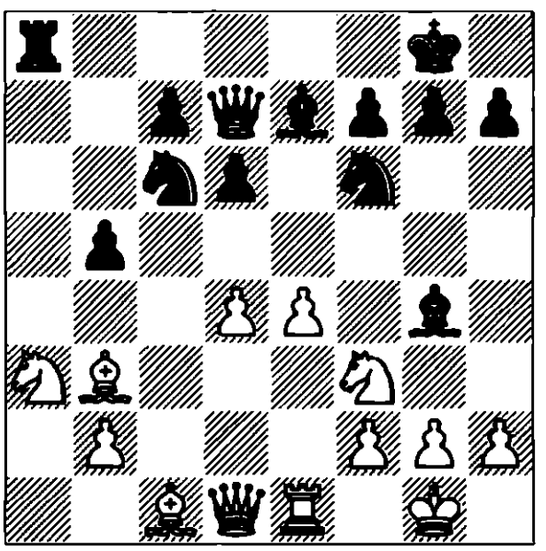
11 axb5

White starts forcing the play, trying to exploit Black's weakened queenside. After 11 d5 ♘a5 12 ♗c2 c6 13 h3 ♗h5 14 dxc6 ♕xc6 15 ♘bd2 ♘b7 16 ♘f1 ♘c5 17 ♘g3 ♗g6 18 ♘h4 ♖fe8 19 ♘hf5 ♗f8 20 ♕f3 bxa4! 21 h4 d5! Black was clearly doing well in Panchenko-Savon, Moscow 1979.

11...axb5 12 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 13 ♘a3

This appears to be the consistent continuation. After 13 d5 ♘a5 14 ♗c2 c6 15 dxc6, we suggest 15...♕xc6!, which fights for control of the d5-square, rather than the 15...♘xc6?! of Thiele-Necesany, corr. 1972.

13...exd4 14 cxd4 *(D)*



14...d5

If it weren't for this central counter-stroke, White's plan might be quite annoying.

Now 15 e5 is definitely the critical move, but we believe that Black's activity fully compensates for the sacrificed pawn after 15...♘e4 16 ♘xb5 and now either 16...♗b4 or the more adventurous 16...♖a1!?.

Conclusion:

This is quite a tricky line, sometimes used by White as a surprise weapon. However, its objective merits are questionable. If Black knows what he is doing, he shouldn't experience any problems whatsoever. We would like to draw the reader's attention to Sashikiran's recent idea 10...♕c8!?, which looks like a good recipe.

Illustrative Game 18

Petrushin – Nenashev
St Petersburg 1995

15 exd5

This was a rather feeble decision in this, the only practical test of this position that we are aware of.

15...♘a5

15...♗xf3! looks very strong. Anyway, Black is absolutely fine at this point.

16 ♗a2 ♗b4 17 ♖e5 ♗xa3?!

17...♗d6 18 ♖e1 ♗b4 would have been a logical draw by repetition.

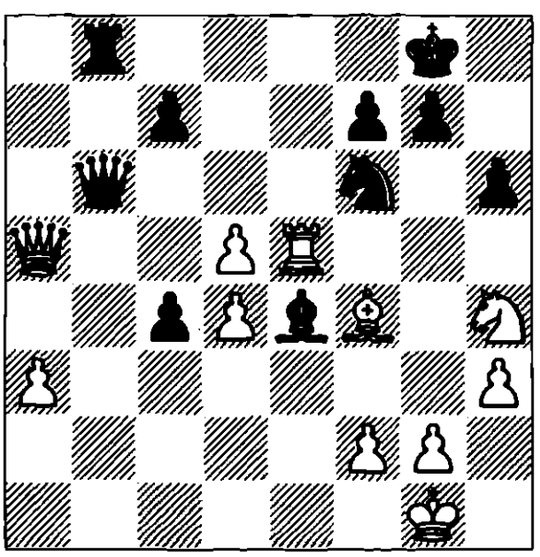
18 bxa3 ♘c4 19 h3 ♗f5 20 ♘h4 ♗e4 21 ♗xc4 bxc4 22 ♗g5 ♖b8 23 ♕d2 ♕d6

23...♗xd5?! 24 ♘f5 is very unpleasant for Black.

24 ♕a5?

Instead 24 ♕f4 ♗d3 25 ♘f5 ♗xf5 26 ♕xf5 keeps an edge for White. After the text-move, Black is instantly better.

24...h6 25 ♗f4 ♕b6 *(D)*



26 ♗d2?

Also after the better 26 ♕xb6 ♖xb6, the threat of ...g5 ensures that Black's passed c-pawn will be very dangerous; e.g., 27 f3 ♗d3 28 ♘f5 ♖b1+ 29 ♔f2 c3 ∓.

26...♕xd4 27 ♕xc7

27 ♖e7 ♖b1+ 28 ♔h2 ♕xf2 basically comes to the same thing.

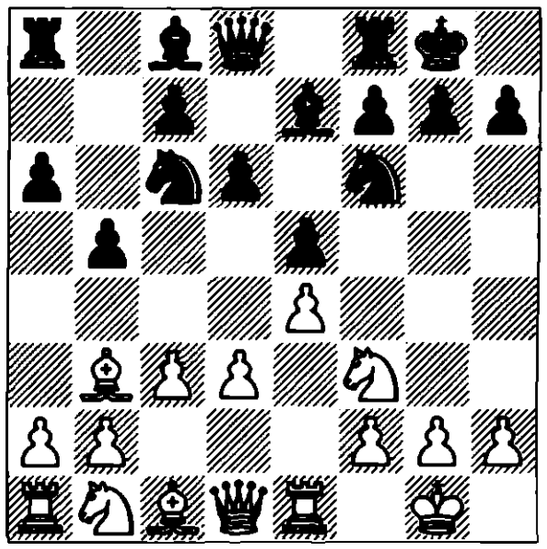
27...♖b1+ 28 ♔h2 ♕xf2 29 ♘f3 ♖g1 0-1

6E: Pilnik's 9 d3

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0)

9 d3 *(D)*

This seemingly modest move is sometimes called the Pilnik Variation. It has been played occasionally by many extremely strong players and should not be underestimated. White is



quite likely, at some point, to lose a tempo by playing d4 in two steps rather than one. However, White can often compensate for that tempo-loss by saving the time-consuming h3, as ...♗g4 is no threat as long as White has not exposed his centre by playing d4. Furthermore, White will often organize his pieces (e.g. by ♘d2-f1-g3) more comfortably behind his modest centre than he can do while protecting his central space advantage. The obvious drawback with White's modest central stand is that Black can sometimes consider taking command of the centre himself by ...d5 (before White gets in d4). This fight for ...d5 and d4 is very typical of the Italian Game, with which the Ruy Lopez with d3 has much in common generally.

Some lines discussed here may transpose from 5 d3 lines, but a more common transposition arises from the Marshall move-order 7...0-0 8 d3 d6 9 c3 (see 'Ruy Lopez Overview' in the Introduction for details). It is also worth noting that this position can arise from the Closed Italian, which our illustrative game for this section, Tissir-Campora, Catalan Bay 2003, in fact did.

9...♘a5

This mainly prepares queenside expansion with ...c5, and may lead to positions reminiscent of the Chigorin Variation. It clearly is Black's most popular move at this point, and the fact that 10...♘a5 is also the most popular choice after 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d3 hints that this may be the objectively best move and not just reflect a preference for the Chigorin formation over the Breyer. However, for the next few moves, there will be very little direct contact between the two armies, leaving Black with rather free hands for improving his position, so obviously

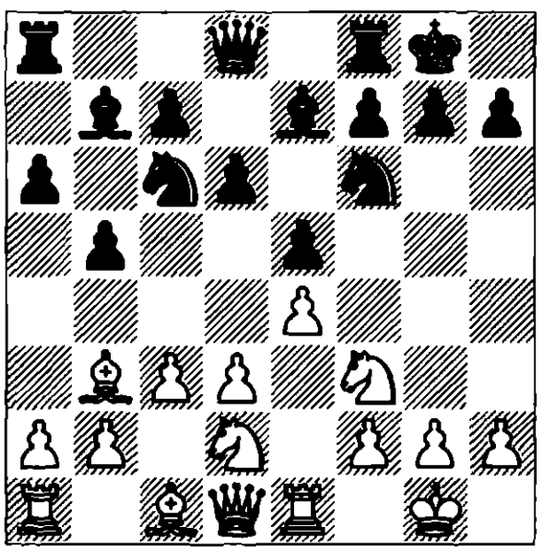
a lot of other moves must be playable. What Black cannot do, is to stop White unfolding his position with ♘bd2-f1-g3, and when that has happened he needs to be ready for White's activity.

It seems very relevant to see what can happen if Black continues with 9...♗b7 and Zaitsev-style development:

a) 10 h3 – *9 h3 ♗b7 10 d3.*

b) 10 ♘bd2 *(D)* and then:

B



b1) 10...♕d7 11 ♘f1 ♖ae8!? 12 ♘g3 ♗d8 is an extremely aggressive set-up. You would expect some kingside activity from Black after this, but the ..f5 break seems hard to organize at the moment (even after moves like ...♔h8 and ...♘g8). Therefore he has to settle for the alternative break in the centre, namely ...d5: 13 ♗g5 h6 14 ♗e3 ♘e7 (this would have been a good moment for 14...d5!?) 15 a4 ♘g6 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♕c1 ♔h7? (after 17...d5, Black's position still looks OK) 18 ♘f5 and suddenly Black's kingside crumbled in Schiffers-Chigorin, St Petersburg 1897.

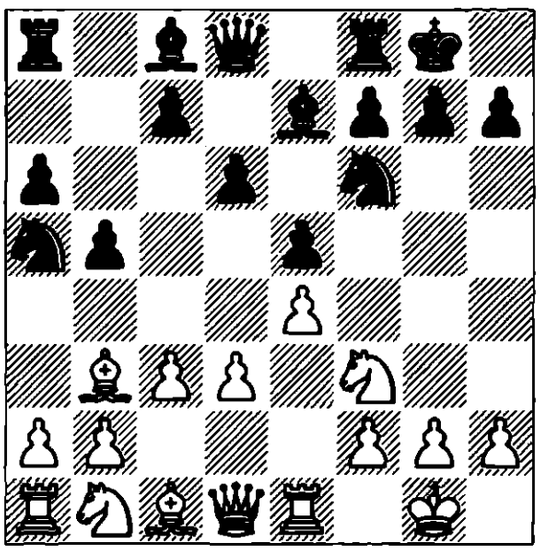
b2) 10...♖e8 is playable too:

b21) After 11 ♘g5, Black has no choice but to play 11...♖f8, but then he will have an easier job to avoid the repetition after 12 ♘gf3 than in the similar Zaitsev position.

b22) 11 ♘f1 ♗f8 12 ♘g3 g6 13 ♘g5 d5!? (Black rightly rejected 13...♖e7 on account of 14 f4! with a dangerous initiative for White; note that f4 is more positionally founded here than in similar situations where White's pawn is on d4, as the e4-point is well protected now) 14 exd5 ♘a5 15 c4 (the only critical move as after 15 ♗c2 every capture on d5 looks satisfactory for Black) 15...c6 16 dxc6 ♗xc6 17 ♕e2 ♘xb3 18 axb3 ♘d7 19 ♕c2 h6 ½-½ Psakhis-Lev, Tel-Aviv 1990. In the final position Black's position is clearly the more promising, but the 100-point rating difference told.

We now return to 9...♘a5 *(D)*:

W



10 ♗c2 c5

Obviously this must be the main idea behind the knight move. Now Black has the central space he needs to coordinate his pieces and to connect his flanks. For some information on the typical plans and procedures available to the two sides in a Chigorin set-up, see 'Broaden Your Horizon' in the Introduction.

11 ♘bd2

White has had no use of his modest 9th move yet, so it seems too early for White to transpose to a tempo-down Chigorin with 11 d4 unless he is completely convinced that his opponent has no classical schooling, and will not know how to make use of it. Psakhis-Flear, Szirak 1986 continued 11...♕c7 12 ♘bd2 cxd4 13 cxd4 ♗g4!? (exploiting the fact that White has not played h3) 14 h3 ♗h5 15 d5 ♖fc8 16 ♗d3 ♘b7 17 ♘f1 ♘c5 18 ♗b1 ♗g6 19 ♘g3 ♗d8 20 ♗c2 ♘cd7 21 ♖e2 ♘h5 22 ♘xh5 ½-½.

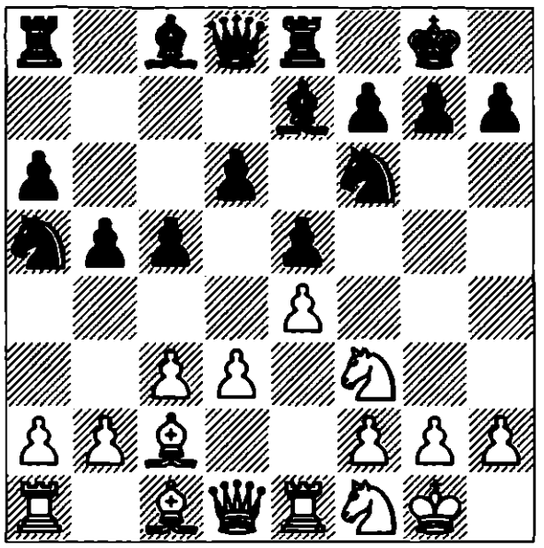
11...♖e8

This prepares ...♗f8 followed by a later ...g6 and ...♗g7, which in general is a very useful regrouping. Another interesting development scheme starts with 11...♕c7!?; e.g., 12 ♘f1 ♘c6 and now Black plans ...♗e6 and ...♖ad8, trying to achieve a quick ...d5. Another point of having the queen on c7 is that it is harder for White to accomplish d4 because of the hanging nature of the c2-bishop. This should also be

highly satisfactory for Black, but we chose to focus on the text-move.

12 ♘f1 *(D)*

12 h3 ♗b7 13 ♘f1 g6 14 ♘g3 ♗f8 – *12 ♘f1 g6 13 ♘g3 ♗f8 14 h3 ♗b7.*


B

12...g6!?

This may be a more accurate move-order than 12...♗f8, as 13 ♗g5 can now be met by 13...♘h5!?.

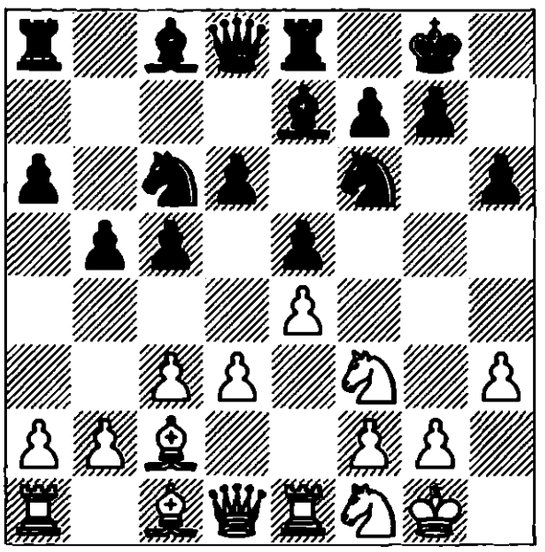
Black has some fully playable alternatives:

a) 12...♗f8 will frequently lead to the same positions, but is most often met by 13 ♗g5, when the pin could turn out to be annoying. In these positions the white f1-knight more often settles on e3 instead of the traditional g3.

b) There can hardly be any doubt that 12...h6 is playable. It is, however, a move Black would prefer to delay or in some cases even omit, so we only give a Kasparov game demonstrating White's attacking potential: 13 d4 cxd4 14 cxd4 exd4 15 ♘xd4 ♗f8 16 f3 g6 17 b3 ♗g7 18 ♗b2 ♗b7 19 ♕d2 ♖c8 20 ♖ad1 ♕b6 21 ♔h1 ♘d7 22 ♘e3! (here this square is obviously more attractive for the knight than g3) 22...♘c6 23 ♘d5 ♕d8 24 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 25 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 26 ♘e3 ♖e6 27 b4 ♘b6 28 ♗b3 ♖e8 29 ♘g4 ♕g5 30 ♕d4+ 1-0 Kasparov-Adams, London rpd (1) 1993.

c) 12...♘c6 is a very sensible alternative. The knight was unemployed on a5, so Black brings it back and for the moment doesn't reveal anything about his kingside intentions. After 13 h3 h6 *(D)* practice has seen two moves:

c1) 14 ♘g3 ♗f8 (now Black is ready to advance in the centre with ...d5, so White hurries with d4) 15 d4 cxd4 16 cxd4 exd4 17 ♘xd4


W

♘xd4 18 ♕xd4 ♗b7 19 ♗f4 ♖c8 20 ♗b3 and now the typical break for such positions: 20...d5! 21 e5 ♗c5 22 ♕d3 ♘e4 23 ♘xe4 dxe4 24 ♕g3 ♕b6 and Black was doing fine in Dobrovolsky-Kasperek, Myslenice 1987.

c2) 14 d4 cxd4 15 cxd4 exd4 16 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 17 ♕xd4 ♗b7 18 ♘g3 d5 (18...♗f8 transposes to line 'c1') 19 e5 ♘e4 20 ♘xe4 dxe4 21 ♗e3 ♕xd4 22 ♗xd4 was Kasparov-Svidler, Linares 1999 and here 22...♖ad8 23 ♖ad1 ♗b4 24 ♖e3 ♖d7 would have equalized completely.

13 ♘g3

Alternatively White can try:

a) After 13 ♘e3, White has lost the opportunity to play ♗g5, and Black can safely reply 13...♗f8.

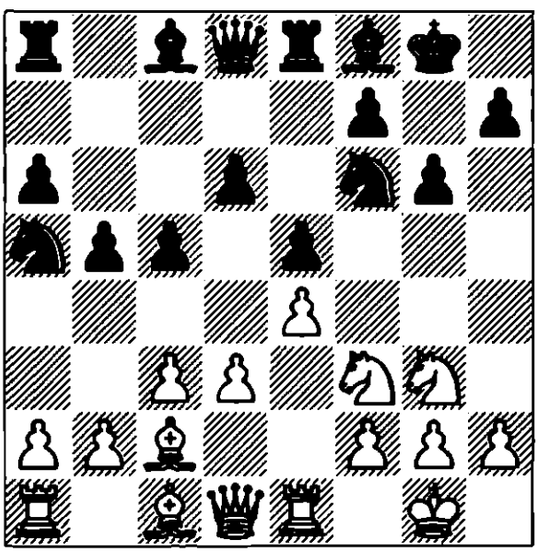
b) If White tries 13 d4 at this point, we recommend the calm 13...♕c7, supporting the pawn-centre in typical Chigorin fashion. It is possible to compare this position with a line from the normal Chigorin (9...♘a5) and establish which extra move Black has got (...g6 is a hot tip). That may, however, be less enlightening than you would expect as the Chigorin set-up generally leads to manoeuvring play where the counting of tempi is quite irrelevant and an intelligent plan is what counts.

c) 13 a3 c4!? 14 d4 ♗b7 (Black has a good grip on the queenside now) 15 ♘g3 ♗f8 16 h3 ♗g7 17 ♗e3 exd4 18 ♗xd4 ♘c6 19 ♗e3 ♕c7 20 ♕d2 ♘e5 21 ♘xe5 dxe5 = L.Cooper-Hebden, Isle of Man 1997.

d) After 13 h3 Black should probably delay ...♗f8 for at least one more move with 13...♖b8, when White runs short of good waiting moves; e.g., 14 ♘e3 ♗f8 15 ♘h2 ♗g7 16 ♘hg4 ♘xg4

17 hxg4 ♗e6 18 ♕f3 ♕h4!? 19 g3 ♕h3 20 ♗d1 ♗h6 21 ♗e2 ♗xe3!? 22 ♗xe3 f5 23 exf5 gxf5 with an unbalanced position in Pancevski-Skembris, Skopje 2002.

13...♗f8 *(D)*



14 h3

Now the game merges with a lot of lines where White has played this move earlier.

a) 14 ♗g5 ♗g7 15 h3 h6 16 ♗d2 ♗b7 – *14 h3 ♗b7 15 ♗g5 h6 16 ♗d2 ♗g7.*

b) After 14 d4 we again advocate 14...♕c7; e.g., 15 d5 c4 16 h3 ♘b7 17 ♘h2 ♘c5 (a typical regrouping, improving the knight's position) 18 ♗e3, but instead of 18...♗d7 19 ♖f1 ♗g7 20 ♕d2 ♖f8 21 f4!, when White grabbed the initiative in Short-Wiedenkeller, Copenhagen jr Wch 1982, we suggest 18...♗g7, with the point of keeping d7 available for a knight so that after an eventual f4 Black can play ...exf4 and occupy the e5-square immediately. A normal plan then would be ...♖b8, followed by ...a5 and ...b4, trying to create counterplay on the queenside.

14...♗g7

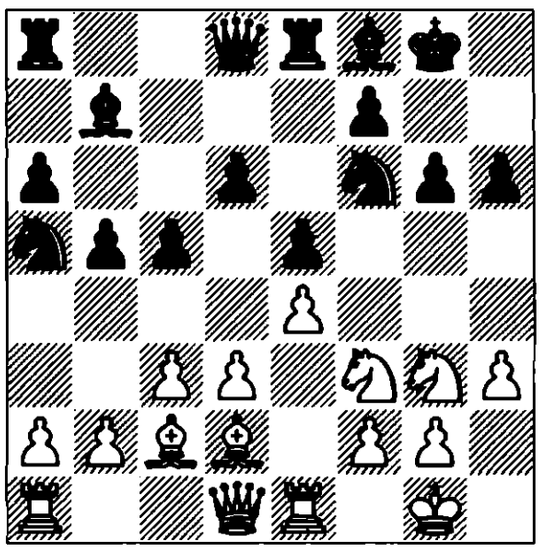
We believe this is Black's most flexible move. Nevertheless we must take a look at 14...♗b7, if for nothing else because the position can arise via various move-orders from *9 h3 ♗b7 10 d3*:

a) 15 d4 cxd4 16 cxd4 exd4 17 ♘xd4 d5! 18 e5 ♘e4 and now:

a1) 19 ♘xe4 dxe4 20 ♗xe4 ♖xe5 21 ♗xb7 ♖xe1+ 22 ♕xe1 ♘xb7 is dead equal, but maybe Black could even improve on this.

a2) 19 ♗f4 ♘c4 20 ♘f3 ♘xb2 21 ♕d4 ♘c4 22 ♗xe4 (Black is also better in case of 22 ♘xe4 dxe4 23 ♗xe4 ♕xd4 24 ♘xd4 ♗xe4 25 ♖xe4 ♗g7) 22...dxe4 23 ♘xe4 ♕xd4 24 ♘f6+ ♔h8 25 ♘xd4 ♖ed8 and in Malakhov-Vescovi, Hyderabad 2002 Black was better because of his dominating bishops.

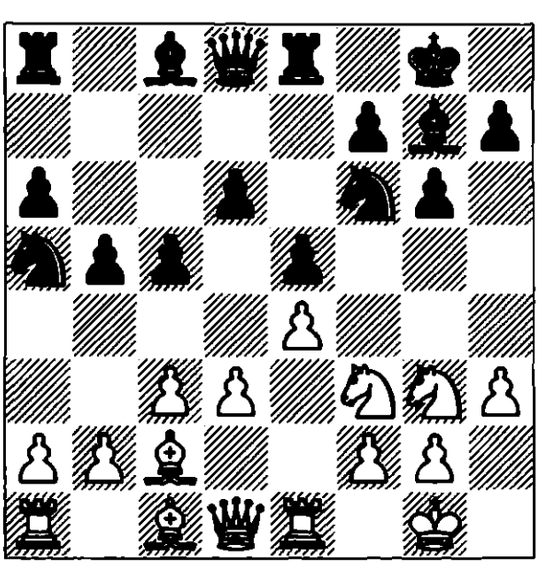
b) 15 ♗g5 h6 16 ♗d2 *(D)* and now:



b1) 16...♗g7 (this position can also arise from the move-order *14 ♗g5 ♗g7 15 h3 h6 16 ♗d2 ♗b7*) 17 a3 and now 17...d5 seems to work fine: 18 exd5 c4! 19 d4 exd4 20 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 21 ♘xd4 ♗xd5 ∓.

b2) 16...d5?! is unfortunately too optimistic: 17 exd5 c4 (17...♕xd5 18 ♕c1 ♔h7 19 c4 ♕d8 20 ♘xe5 ±) 18 b4 cxd3 19 ♗xd3 ♕xd5 20 ♗e4 ♘xe4 21 ♘xe4 ♗g7 22 bxa5 f5 23 ♘g3 e4 24 ♘h4 and even though things weren't absolutely clear in Fischer-Spassky, Sveti Stefan/Belgrade (7) 1992, the extra white knight should prevail in the long run.

We now return to 14...♗g7 *(D)*:



15 d4

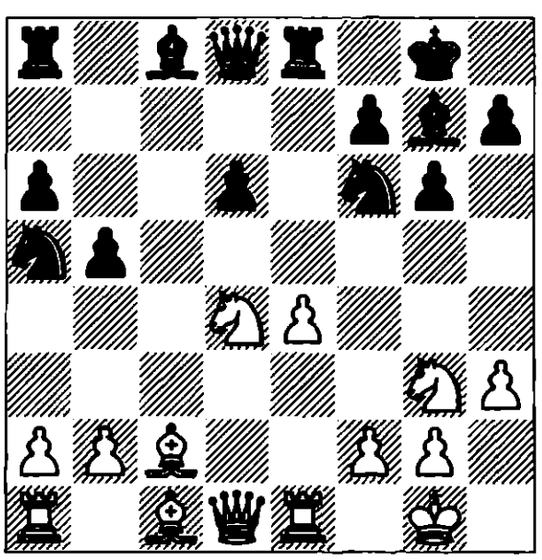
In the 2005 European Clubs Cup, our team – Oslo Schakselskap – was paired versus one of the favourites in the first round, namely Polonia Warsaw. While I (Leif) was sweating with Black against Ivanchuk on board 1 (not a Zaitsev, but a Sveshnikov!), my team-mate Sverre Heim played Bartosz Socko with White on one of the lower boards. After 15 ♗e3 ♕c7 Heim chose the premature 16 b4?! cxb4 17 cxb4 ♘c6 18 a3 d5! 19 ♖c1 d4 20 ♗d2 ♕d6 and Black had a lot of space and was already slightly better in Heim-Socko, Saint Vincent ECC 2005, even though our man held the draw after 58 moves.

15...cxd4

Black is fully mobilized and prepared for an open battle, so we have no qualms recommending this move. Especially the g7-bishop will look menacingly down the long diagonal. The alternative is the more cautious 15...♕c7.

16 cxd4 exd4 17 ♘xd4 *(D)*

B



17...♗b7

Positions of this kind are among the hardest to get to grips with in the Ruy complex. The pawn-structure is favourable for White, so obviously Black has to compensate with dynamic piece-play. Control of the d5-square is also important; it is normally a good omen for Black if he has more influence over that square. In this sense it is an achievement that the white knight is on g3 at the moment, far away from d5.

An alternative is 17...♕b6 18 ♘f3 ♗b7 19 ♗e3 ♕d8 20 ♗d4 ♘c6 21 ♗c3 b4 22 ♗d2 ♘d7 23 ♗b3, when Davies suggests 23...♘c5 24 ♗d5 ♖b8 = as an improvement over the 23...♘de5 of Stefanova-Hebden, Catalan Bay 2004.

18 ♗f4

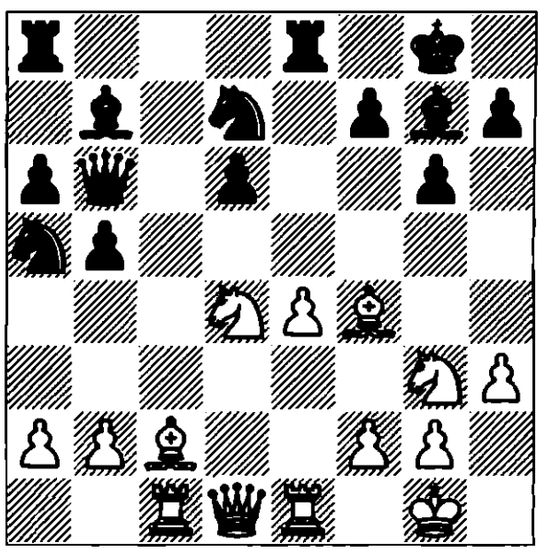
White has also tried:

a) 18 ♗d2 ♘c4 19 ♗c3 d5 20 e5 ♘e4 21 ♘xe4 dxe4 22 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 23 ♖xe4 ♕d5 24 ♖e1 ♖xe5 25 ♘e2 ♖g5 26 ♕xd5 ♖xd5 ∓ Timoshchenko-Katalymov, Krasnoiarsk 1980.

b) 18 b3 d5 19 e5 ♘e4 20 ♘xe4 dxe4 21 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 22 ♖xe4 ♕d5 23 ♖e2 ♘c6 24 ♗b2 ♖ad8 ∓ Shaginian-Grachev, St Petersburg 2002.

18...♘d7 19 ♖c1 ♕b6 *(D)*

W



Black is doing well here, as White's aggressive tries all appear to fall short.

Conclusion:

9 d3 is a clever attempt to avoid a heavy dose of theory in the main lines while maintaining a complicated middlegame position. White hopes to outplay his opponent rather than allowing him to spit out book moves for the first couple of hours of the playing session. However, such a slow approach shouldn't really offer White much. We recommend the quick manoeuvre ...♗f8-g7, after which Black is ready to meet the belated d4: he will capture twice and his bishops will point menacingly down both the long diagonals. In general, piece activity will then compensate for Black's structural flaws.

Illustrative Game 19

Tissir – Campora
Catalan Bay 2003

20 ♘df5!?

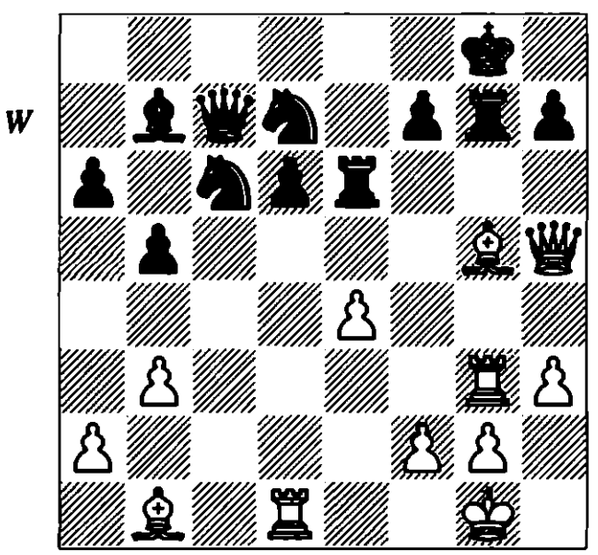
a) 20 ♘f3 ♗xb2 21 ♖b1 ♗c3 ∓.

b) 20 ♗e3 ♘c4 ∓.

20...gxf5 21 ♘xf5 ♘e5 22 ♕h5 ♖e6 23 ♖cd1

We don't know at which point Black realized that he was winning the game, and not at the receiving end of a prepared brilliancy, but this relatively slow move must have been encouraging. 23 ♗e3 is probably better, but 23...♕d8 24 f4 ♘ec4 25 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 26 ♗d4+ ♔g8 27 e5 ♖g6 28 ♗xg6 hxg6 defends with the better chances for Black.

23...♖ae8 24 b3 ♕c7 25 ♗b1 ♘ac6 26 ♖e3 ♖g6 27 ♖g3 ♖ee6 28 ♗g5 ♘d7 29 ♘xg7 ♖xg7 *(D)*



Objectively White's attack has failed, but Black's king position is damaged and most of his pieces are positioned on the queenside, a few moves away from their defensive duties. This enables White to fight on with some hope.

30 e5 h6?!

The solid 30...♘f8! defends everything, with a winning position.

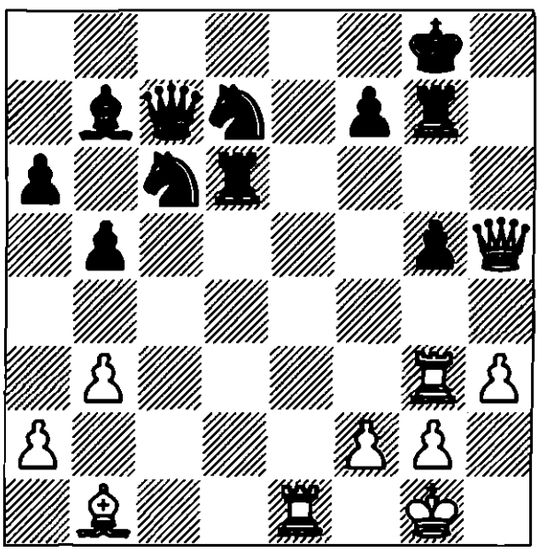
31 exd6

31 ♗xh6? ♖xg3 32 fxg3 ♘cxe5 33 ♖d4 ♕c3! not only covers everything but also threatens a deadly counter-attack; for example, 34 ♗h7+ (34 ♖h4 loses at once to 34...♘f3+) 34...♔h8 35 ♗e4 ♘f6 and White's attack has been repulsed.

31...♖xd6 32 ♖e1 hxg5? *(D)*

33 h4?

It seems White must have lost faith in his attacking resources here, otherwise he probably would have found the nice line 33 ♖e8+ ♘f8 34 ♗h7+!! ♖xh7 35 ♕xg5+ ♖g6 36 ♕c5, when Black must avoid 36...♔g7? 37 ♕xf8+ ♔f6 38 ♖f3+ ♔g5 39 h4+! ♔xh4 (39...♖xh4 40 ♕c5+ +–) 40 ♕c5 and Black cannot save his king.



Instead 36...♕e7 37 ♖xe7 ♘xe7 38 ♕xe7 ♖xg3 39 fxg3 f5 40 ♕g5+ ♖g7 41 ♕f4 leads to a position which is actually pretty drawish.

33...♘ce5 34 hxg5 ♘g6 35 ♖h3 ♘df8 36 ♗xg6 fxg6 37 ♕h8+ ♔f7 38 ♖h4 ♖c6 39 ♖he4 ♖c1 40 ♖e8 ♖xe1+ 41 ♖xe1 ♖h7 0-1

6F: Rare 9th Moves

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0)

9 a4

This is one of White's most underestimated tries.

More minor options can hardly promise White an opening advantage, but may lead to very complicated positions with good prospects for the stronger player:

a) 9 ♕e2 ♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 d3 ♘c6 12 ♘bd2 ♖e8 13 ♘f1 ♗f8 14 h3 g6 15 a4 ♖b8 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♘3h2 ♗g7 = Veličković-Mujagić, Sombor 2004.

b) 9 a3!? was Suetin's pet line, primarily seeking to keep the bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal. After 9...♘a5, White has:

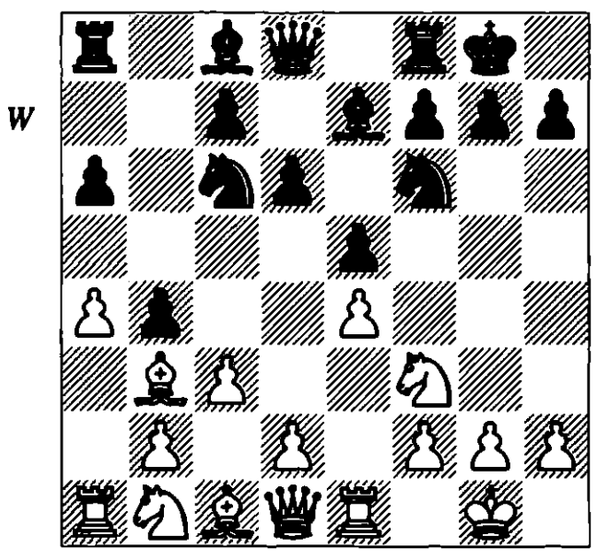
b1) 10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4 ♕c7 12 ♘bd2 ♗d7 13 ♘f1 ♖fe8 with a fairly standard Chigorin type of position. One game by the line's great advocate went 14 b3 cxd4 15 cxd4 ♗g4!? (exploiting the fact that White hasn't played h3) 16 d5 ♗xf3 17 gxf3 ♘h5 18 ♘g3 ♘f4 19 ♘e2 ♖ac8 20 ♖a2 ♗g5 21 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 22 ♗d3 ♗g5 and Black was at least not worse in Suetin-B.Ivkov, Sochi 1980.

b2) 10 ♗a2 c5 11 d4 c4 12 ♘bd2 ♗b7 13 ♗b1 ♕c7 14 ♗c2 ♖ae8 15 d5 ♘d7 16 ♘f1 ♘c5 17 ♖b1 ♗c8 18 ♘g3 ♗d7 19 h3 ♗d8, Loskutov-Belozerov, Tomsk 2004. We prefer

Black's position here; ...♘ab3 followed by ...a5 and ...b4 is a possible future plan.

9...b4!? *(D)*

The two most normal-looking moves are 9...♗g4 and 9...♗b7, but there are problems with them both. If the bishop goes to g4 before White has played d4, the plan of d3, ♘bd2-♘f1-g3 and h3 may be troublesome, and if it goes to b7, White can save the h-pawn move altogether. Davies suggests that 9...♗d7 is best, and he might be right, but again White can try to do without h3.



This position can also arise from *8 a4 b4 9 c3 0-0.*

10 a5!?

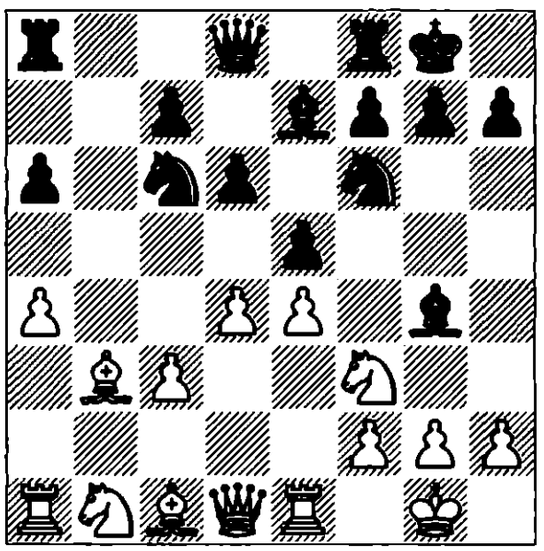
This is the really characteristic move. White simultaneously prevents ...♘a5 and cements Black's a-pawn as a target. Actually both a-pawns are a bit vulnerable, but White's is a lot harder to attack with natural moves. It is nevertheless quite possible that more neutral moves are objectively just as strong:

a) 10 h3 is mainly preparation for d4. After 10...♖b8 White has tried:

a1) 11 d4 bxc3 12 bxc3 exd4 13 cxd4 d5 14 exd5 (14 e5 ♘e4 =) 14...♘xd5 15 ♗a3 ♗xa3 16 ♖xa3 ♕d6 17 ♘e5 ♗e6 and Black was obviously doing very well in Ljubojević-Piket, Monte Carlo 1995.

a2) 11 a5 ♗e6 (11...♖b5!? is not for the faint of heart, but it's not a trivial task for White to trap the rook after 12 ♗a4 ♖xa5) 12 ♗xe6 fxe6 13 d4 exd4?! (instead we advocate 13...bxc3 14 bxc3 exd4 15 cxd4 ♘b4!, when Black is active and plans to follow up with a quick ...c5) 14 cxd4 ♖b5 15 ♘bd2 ♘xa5? (15...♕d7 was still bearable, even though White is comfortably better after 16 ♘b3) 16 ♘b3 ♘xb3 17 ♕xb3 ♕c8? (17...♕d7 is still the best chance) 18 ♘g5 d5 19 exd5 ♘xd5 20 ♘xe6 ± Short-Ljubojević, Monte Carlo 1993.

b) 10 d4 bxc3 11 bxc3 ♗g4 *(D)* and in this position:



b1) It seems that after 12 d5 ♘a5 13 ♗a2, Black will eventually succeed in bringing the knight back into play, securing him a satisfactory game: 13...♘d7 14 ♗a3 ♗g5! (a strong move, making it harder for White to finish his development) 15 h3 ♗xf3 16 ♕xf3 g6 17 ♕d1 ♘b7 18 ♘d2 ♘bc5 and Black was comfortable in Savon-Beliavsky, Frunze 1979. The game continuation was instructive: 19 ♘f3 ♗h6 20 ♗c4 f5 21 exf5 gxf5 22 ♗f1 ♕f6 23 a5 ♔h8 24 ♖b1 ♖g8 25 ♖b4 ♖g7 26 ♕c2 ♖ag8 27 ♖c4 (a highly artificial development of the rook) 27...e4 28 ♘d4 ♘d3 ∓ 29 ♗xd3? 0-1.

b2) After 12 ♗e3 exd4 13 cxd4 d5 White has tried:

b21) 14 exd5 ♘xd5 15 ♘bd2 ♗b4 16 ♕c2 ♘xe3 17 fxe3 (Wolff-Nickoloff, Saint John 1988) 17...♗xf3! 18 ♘xf3 (18 gxf3? ♘xd4!) 18...♗xe1 and we do not believe White has full compensation after either 19 ♕xc6 ♗h4 or 19 ♖xe1 ♕f6 20 ♖f1 ♕h6.

b22) After 14 e5 ♘e4 we have:

b221) 15 h3?! ♗h5 16 ♘bd2 ♗b4!? (here too, 16...♘xd2 17 ♕xd2 ♗b4 is possible) 17 ♕c2 ♘a5?! (17...♗xf3!? 18 ♘xf3 ♗c3 leaves White struggling for compensation) 18 ♖ec1 ♘c3 19 ♕d3 ♗g6 20 ♕f1 ♘e4 21 ♗c2 ♕e7 with equality, Tolush-Furman, USSR Ch (Riga) 1958.

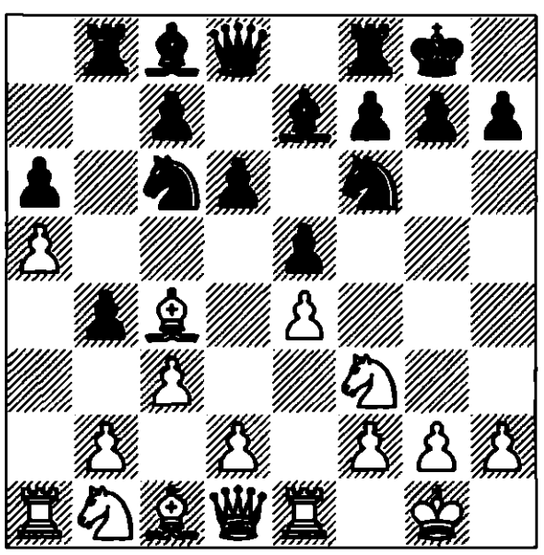
b222) 15 ♘bd2 ♘xd2 16 ♕xd2 ♗b4 17 ♕c2 ♗xf3 18 ♕xc6 ♗xe1 19 gxf3 ♖b8 20 ♗xd5 ♖b6 21 ♕c4 ♗c3 = Firman-Bitansky, Kallithea ECC 2002.

10...♖b8

This move is played almost exclusively in practice, but is it really necessary? Bacrot gives the untested 10...♗e6!? and evaluates it as equal. The bishop move is very interesting. A plausible line is 11 d4 (11 ♗xe6 fxe6 is obviously harmless; e.g., 12 ♕b3 ♕d7 13 ♘g5?! d5! with an initiative for Black) 11...♗xb3 12 ♕xb3 bxc3 13 bxc3 exd4 14 cxd4 d5! 15 e5 ♘e4 with typical counterplay for Black, who will be quicker to get to the b-file and also has the nice b4-square at his disposal.

11 ♗c4 *(D)*

B



11...bxc3

If this had been a book on the Marshall and Anti-Marshalls, we would probably have recommended 11...d5!? as an alternative. It is indeed interesting, but since we couldn't quickly establish whether it was 100% sound and because Black has several reliable options in this line, we shall not be investigating it in detail here.

12 dxc3

Capturing away from the centre, but the positionally desirable 12 bxc3 is tactically dubious because of 12...♘xa5!, exploiting the loose knight on b1. In Tal-Smyslov, USSR Cht (Moscow) 1966 White tried the third recapture, namely 12 ♘xc3, but without much success: 12...♗g4 13 h3 (13 ♗xa6 ♖a8) 13...♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 ♘d4 15 ♕d1 c6 16 ♘e2 ♘b5 17 d3 d5 18 exd5 cxd5 19 ♗xb5 ♖xb5 20 ♘c3 ½-½.

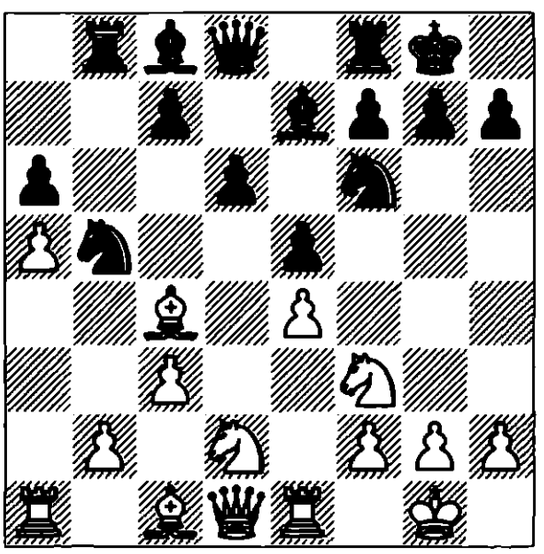
12...♘a7?!

We are not so sure whether we like the knight manoeuvre to b5 that is introduced with this move. A possible improvement: 12...♗b7 13 ♘bd2 ♕c8 14 ♘f1 ♘d8 15 ♘g3 ♖e8 16 ♕a4 ♘e6 17 ♕a2 c6 18 ♗b3 ♗f8 19 ♗e3 ♗a8 20 ♖e2 ♕b7 = Spraggett-Nunn, Wijk aan Zee 1985.

13 ♘bd2 ♘b5 *(D)*

Or 13...♗b7 14 ♕c2 ♘b5 15 ♘f1 ♗c6 16 ♘g3 ♗d7 17 h3 ♕c8 18 ♗d3 ♗e6 19 ♗e3 c5 20 ♘d2 ♕c6 21 ♘c4 ♘d7 22 ♖ad1 ± Nunn-Karpov, Amsterdam 1985.

W



14 ♕c2

14 ♘f1 h6 15 ♘g3 ♔h7 16 h3 c6 17 ♗e3 ♗e6 18 ♗xe6 fxe6 19 ♗b6 ♘c7 20 ♕a4 ♕c8 21 b4 ♘d7 22 ♗e3 ± Damjanović-Jakovljević, Vrnjačka Banja 1996.

14...h6 15 b4

It appears that White's position is the easier to play.

Conclusion:

This is a line to take seriously. We are not convinced that the knight manoeuvre to b5 is Black's best (even though it was played by Karpov). Instead we recommend the reader to have a closer look at Black's alternatives at moves 10 and 12.

Illustrative Game 20

Ulybin – Sturua
Moscow OL 1994

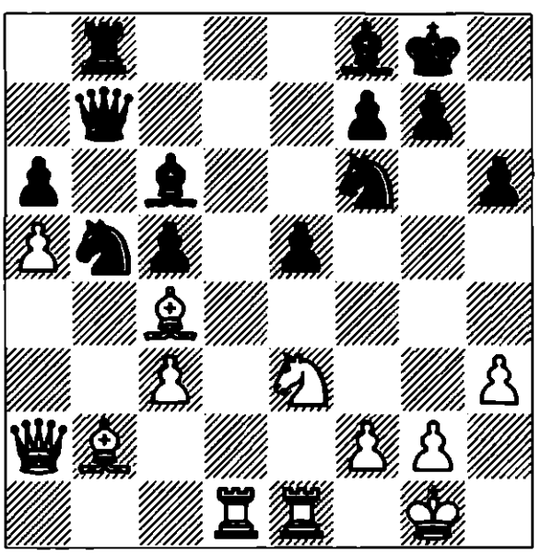
15...♘h5

Here Flear's suggestion 15...♘h7 16 ♘f1 ♘g5 17 ♘xg5 ♗xg5 18 ♘e3 c6 = seems more constructive.

16 ♘f1 ♘f6 17 ♘e3 c6 18 ♗b2 ♘g4 19 ♘f1 ♕c7 20 ♖ad1 c5 21 ♕b3 ♗d7 22 h3 ♘f6 23 ♘h4 ♗c6 24 ♘g6 ♗xe4 25 ♘xf8 ♗xf8 26 ♘e3

Black does not quite have sufficient compensation for the exchange.

26...♗c6 27 bxc5 dxc5 28 ♕a2 ♕b7 *(D)*



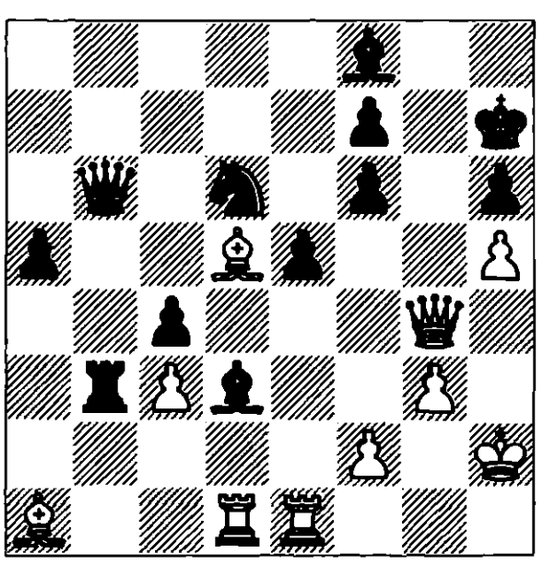
29 ♗a1 ♗e4 30 ♘d5?!

The surprising computer idea 30 ♗xb5! axb5 31 c4! is very strong here.

30...♘d6 31 ♘xf6+ gxf6 32 ♗f1 ♕c6 33 ♕e2 c4 34 ♗b2

Black's nice point was 34 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 35 ♕xe4 ♕xe4 36 ♖xe4 and now 36...♖b1, when a draw is the most likely outcome after 37 ♖xc4 ♖xa1 38 ♖c6 ♗a3 39 ♖xa6 ♗b2.

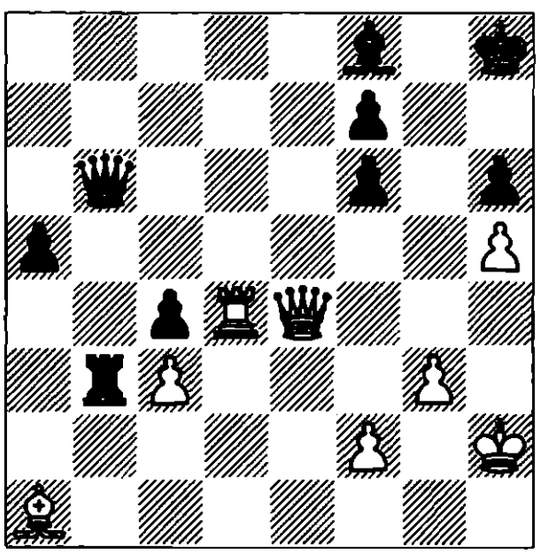
34...♖b3 35 ♗a1?! ♗g6 36 ♔h2 ♕c7 37 g3 ♕xa5 38 ♗g2 ♕b6 39 ♗d5 ♔g7 40 h4 a5 41 h5 ♗d3 42 ♕g4+ ♔h7 *(D)*



43 ♕f3 e4 44 ♗xe4+

44 ♕xf6 is met by 44...♗e7!, when Black is winning because White loses control of f2; e.g., 45 ♕xe7 (or 45 ♕f4 ♗g5!, etc.) 45...♕xf2+ 46 ♔h3 ♕f5+ 47 ♔g2 ♕f3+ 48 ♔h2 ♕xh5+ 49 ♔g1 ♕xd5 –+.

44...♗xe4 45 ♖xe4 ♘xe4 46 ♕xe4+ ♔h8 47 ♖d4?! *(D)*



47...♖b5?

It seems that Black could now have simply picked up the unfortunate bishop: 47...♖b1 48 ♕e8 ♕c5 49 ♕xf7 ♕e7 50 ♕d5 (after 50 ♕g6 ♖xa1 51 ♖g4, Black covers all the threats with 51...♕e6) 50...♕e1 and White must acquiesce to the exchange of queens before Black captures the bishop.

48 ♕e8 ♖xh5+ 49 ♔g2 ♔g8 50 ♖g4+ ♖g5 51 ♖xc4 ♕b7+ 52 ♕e4 ♕d7 53 ♖d4 ♕e6 54 c4 ♕xe4+ 55 ♖xe4 a4 56 ♗xf6 ♖a5 57 ♖e8 a3 58 c5 a2 59 c6 ♖a7 60 ♗d4 ♖c7 61 ♖a8 ♖xc6 62 ♖xa2 ½-½

6G: 8 a4 and Rare 8th Moves

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6)

8 a4

Black threatened ...♘a5, exchanging off the important Spanish bishop, so White has few alternatives to 8 c3. The other moves are either transpositional or not quite sound:

a) 8 d3 0-0 9 c3 – *8 c3 0-0 9 d3.*

b) 8 d4?! ♘xd4 (actually, after 8...0-0!? White has nothing better than transposing to Line 5A with 9 c3) 9 ♘xd4 exd4 and now:

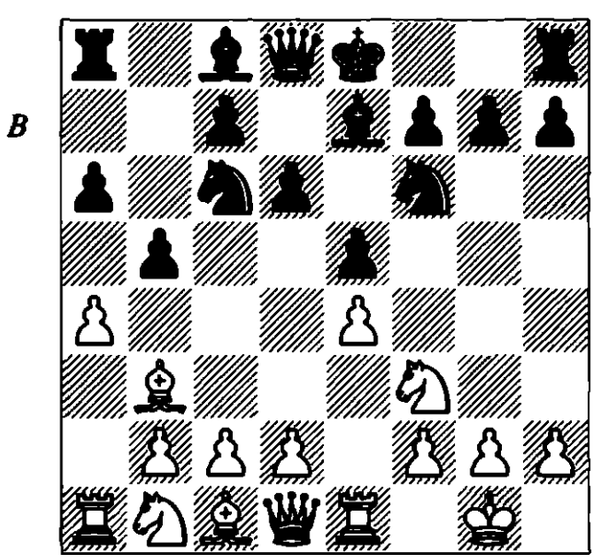
b1) 10 ♕xd4?? c5 11 ♕e3 c4 –+ Zara-Rubinetti, Buenos Aires 1981. This trap, which we

shall encounter again later and in other versions, is popularly known as the Noah's Ark Trap.

b2) 10 c3 dxc3 11 ♘xc3 0-0 12 ♕d3 ♗e6 13 ♗c2 g6 14 ♗h6 ♖e8 15 ♖ad1 ♘g4 ∓ Perez Candelario-Harikrishna, Goa 2002.

c) The pointless 8 h3?! is surprisingly common. 8...♘a5 is obviously embarrassing for White. We would nevertheless like to show an instructive exhibition game by Kramnik from this position, versus the German Finance Minister: 9 c3 ♘xb3 10 ♕xb3 ♗b7 11 d3 0-0 12 ♗e3 c5 13 ♘bd2 ♕c7 14 ♖ac1 ♖fe8 15 ♕c2 d5! (taking over the initiative for good) 16 ♗g5 ♖ad8 17 ♖cd1 h6 18 ♗h4 dxe4 19 dxe4 c4 20 ♗g3 ♗c5 21 ♗h4 g5 22 ♗g3 ♘h5 23 ♘f1 ♘f4 24 ♗xf4 exf4 25 ♘1h2 ♕b6 and Black was dominating in Steinbrück-Kramnik, Bonn rpd 2005. One can learn a lot from such games, where the obvious difference in class allows the expert to unfold his plans unhindered, creating model games.

We now return to 8 a4 *(D)*:



8...b4!?

This, like 8...♗b7, is quite likely to transpose to Anti-Marshall lines. Black's alternatives are:

a) 8...♗e6? loses a pawn to 9 ♗xe6 fxe6 10 ♘g5.

b) 8...♘a5 is a logical move that has been played by Beliavsky among others, but it scores worryingly poorly.

c) 8...♗d7 looks sound enough, but also a little passive.

d) 8...♗g4 is a good move, but to our taste it involves too many lines where Black has to part with his light-squared bishop in exchange for a knight.

9 a5

This again nails down the a6-pawn as a target. Play will now be reminiscent of what we saw in the previous section (Line 6F) but without the move c3. Other moves are less consistent:

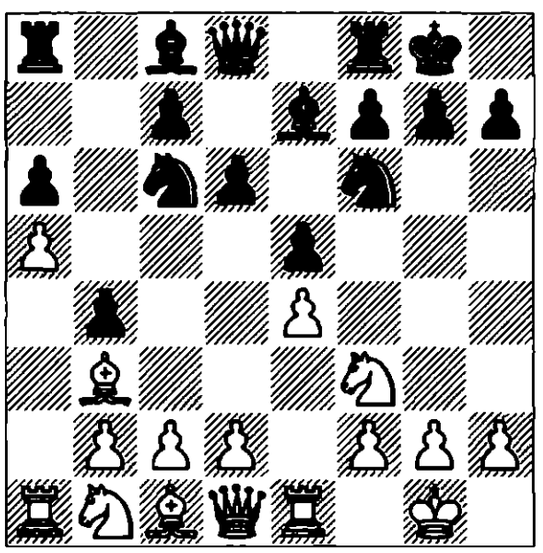
a) 9 c3 0-0 – *8 c3 0-0 9 a4 b4.*

b) 9 d4?! is strongly met by 9...♗g4, when White should satisfy himself with the modest 10 dxe5 ♘xe5 11 ♘bd2. Play can continue 11...♕c8 12 h3 ♗h5, and now:

b1) 13 ♖e3 0-0 14 ♕e1 ♘xf3+ 15 ♘xf3 ♖e8 16 ♗d2 a5 = Kupreichik-Conquest, Copenhagen 1988.

b2) 13 g4 ♘exg4!? (13...♗xg4 also seems to secure at least a draw) 14 hxg4 ♕xg4+ 15 ♔f1?! (after 15 ♔h1 Black has to take the perpetual with 15...♕h3+) 15...♘d7 16 ♔e2? (16 ♗c4 ♗h4 leaves White facing extreme dangers) 16...♘e5 and White was defenceless in Filipenko-Bezgodov, Pskov 1998.

9...0-0 *(D)*



10 d3

After this move we have actually transposed to one of the most popular Anti-Marshall positions, heavily analysed at top level over the last few years. The normal move-order leading to this position is *7...0-0 8 a4 b4 9 d3 d6 10 a5.* Most examples we refer to are therefore top-notch and very recent. Other tries for White:

a) 10 c3 – *8 c3 0-0 9 a4 b4 10 a5* (Line 6F).

b) 10 h3 ♗e6 11 d4 ♘xd4 12 ♘xd4 exd4 13 ♕xd4 c5 14 ♕d3 d5 15 exd5 ♘xd5 16 ♘d2 ♘c7 17 ♕g3 ♗h4 18 ♕f3 ♘b5! and the ex-world

champion was about to grab the initiative in Hjartarson-Smyslov, Copenhagen 1985.

c) 10 d4 ♗g4 11 dxe5 (11 d5 ♘d4 is equal) 11...♘xe5 12 ♘bd2 ♘fd7 13 h3 ♗h5 14 g4 ♗g6 15 ♘xe5 dxe5 16 ♗d5 ♖b8 17 ♘c4 ♗c5 18 ♕f3 ♕e7 19 ♗e3 ♗d4 20 ♖ad1 ♖bd8 = Nunn-Korchnoi, Zurich 1984, the tactical point being 21 ♗xd4 exd4 22 ♖xd4 ♘b8! and Black wins material on account of the threat ...c6.

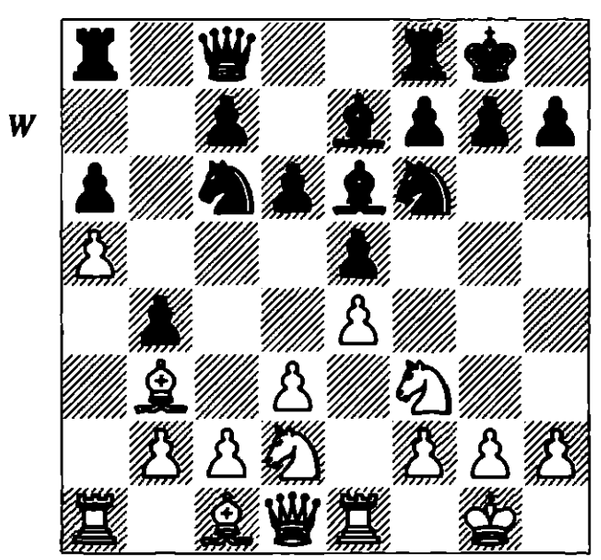
10...♗e6 11 ♘bd2

11 ♗c4 ♕c8 12 ♘bd2 – *11 ♘bd2 ♕c8 12 ♗c4.*

11...♕c8 *(D)*

A useful square for the queen, where it protects the sensitive points e6 and a6. It can also be considered a transit square for the queen; later it will often settle comfortably on b7, to connect the rooks.

11...♗xb3 12 ♘xb3 d5 (before White plays d4) was quite popular for a while, but suffered a serious setback in Sutovsky-Hraček, Gothenburg Echt 2005 which continued 13 ♗g5 d4 14 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 15 ♘fd2 g6 16 ♘c4 ♖b8 17 f4! exf4 18 e5 ♗h4 19 ♖e4 ♖b5 20 ♕f3 ♗g5 21 ♖ae1, when White had tremendous compensation for the pawn with the pawn-break e6 high on his agenda.



12 ♗c4

White continues to exert pressure on the a6-pawn. Two alternatives are reasonable enough:

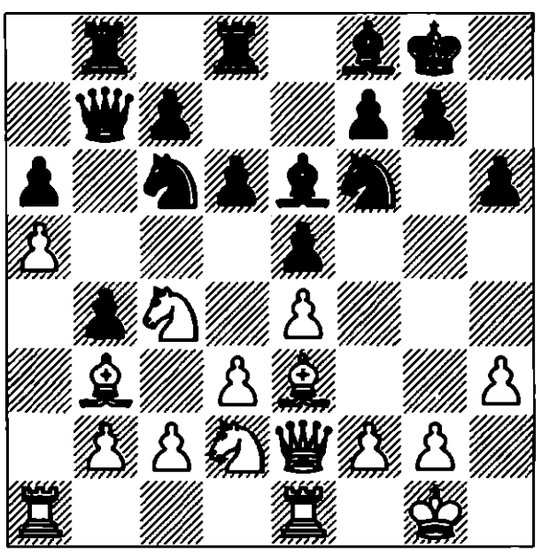
a) 12 h3 ♖b8 13 ♘c4 h6 (Aronian's 13...♔h8 – see line 'b3' – loses some of its point when there is no white bishop on g5) 14 ♗e3 ♖d8 and now:

a1) 15 ♕b1 ♘d7 16 ♕a2 ♖b5 17 c3 d5! 18 exd5 ♗xd5 19 ♘d6 ♗xb3 20 ♘xc8 ♗xa2 21 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 22 ♖xa2 bxc3 23 bxc3 ♘c6 ∓ Stellwagen-Onishchuk, Wijk aan Zee 2005. Quite characteristically for this line, White's Achilles' Heel is the pawn on a5.

a2) 15 ♕e2 ♗f8 and in this position White has tried both the knight hops to d2, but without much luck:

a21) 16 ♘cd2 ♗xb3 17 ♘xb3 ♖e8 18 ♘fd2 d5! 19 exd5 ♘xd5 20 ♕f3 ♖b5 21 ♘c4 ♕d7 22 ♖ad1 f5 23 ♗c1 g6 24 ♖e2 ♔h7 25 ♖de1 ♗g7 26 ♕g3 ♕f7 27 ♕f3 ♕d7 28 ♕g3 ♕f7 29 ♕f3 ½-½ I.Smirin-Grishchuk, Moscow 2002.

a22) 16 ♘fd2 ♕b7 *(D)* has been seen in two recent encounters involving Svidler:



a221) Svidler-Aronian, Linares 2006 ended in a quick draw after 17 ♕f3 ♔h7 18 ♘f1 ♘e7 19 ♘g3 ♘g6 20 ♘h5.

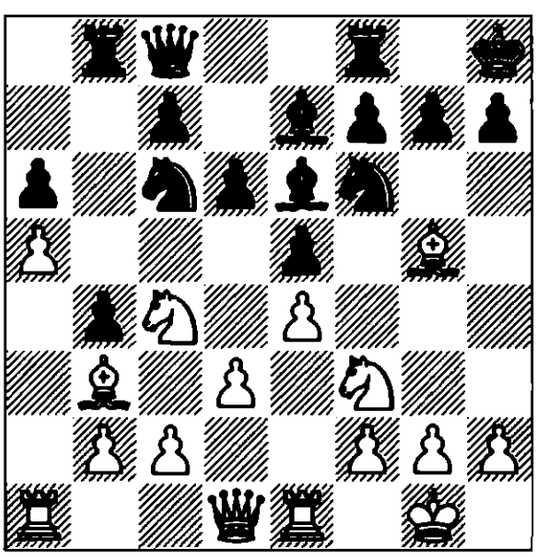
a222) In the later game, Lutz-Svidler, Bundesliga 2005/6, White, who was unfamiliar with this very recent encounter, deviated unfavourably with 17 ♗a4? ♘e7 18 ♕f3 and Svidler demonstrated the difference with 18...♘g6!, when White had to admit his mistake with 19 ♗b3 (19 ♗xh6? now runs into the strong 19...d5! which means that Black managed without the time-consuming ...♔h7) 19...♗e7 20 ♕g3 ♔h8 21 ♘f3?! (White is understandably worried about the ...d5 break and increases the pressure on the e5-pawn, but in doing so he allows his queen to be put offside) 21...♘h5 22 ♕h2 c5 23 ♘cd2 ♕c8 24 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 25 ♘f1 f5! and Black had definitely taken over the initiative.

b) White's most popular move recently has been 12 ♘c4, but at the moment it is suffering a theoretical crisis. After 12...♖b8 White has tried:

b1) 13 h3 – *12 h3 ♖b8 13 ♘c4.*

b2) 13 ♗e3 ♘g4 14 ♗d2 h6 (we very much wanted to make 14...f5 work here, but unfortunately it is premature as the king is exposed on g8) is likely to transpose to line 'a' after 15 h3 ♘f6 16 ♗e3 – *12 h3 ♖b8 13 ♘c4 h6 14 ♗e3.*

b3) 13 ♗g5 has been all the rage, but after Aronian's over-the-board novelty 13...♔h8! *(D)* in the decisive game of Linares 2006 versus Leko, we don't expect to see much more of this line. Here are Aronian's instructive thoughts about the novelty: "The idea behind this move is quite simple: the knight is going to g8 and Black is going to play ...f5. Like many positions in the Italian Game, where Black plays ...♘g4, ...♘h6 and ...f5. And I was satisfied with the result of my plan, as after 13...♔h8 Peter started to think." (an earlier game, T.Pähtz-Kasimdzhanov, Rethymnon ECC 2003, had continued 13...h6 14 ♗h4 ♗g4).



b31) 14 h3 ♘g8 and now:

b311) After 15 c3?! bxc3 16 bxc3 f5!, Black is already better, but White's real problems didn't start until 17 ♗a4? (Aronian gives 17 exf5 ♗xf5 18 ♗e3 as White's relatively best – Black is slightly better, but White is still in the game) 17...fxe4 18 ♗xc6 exf3 19 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 20 ♗xf3 ♘g6! 21 ♗g4 ♘f4!, Black was clearly better and went on to win smoothly in Leko-Aronian, Linares 2006.

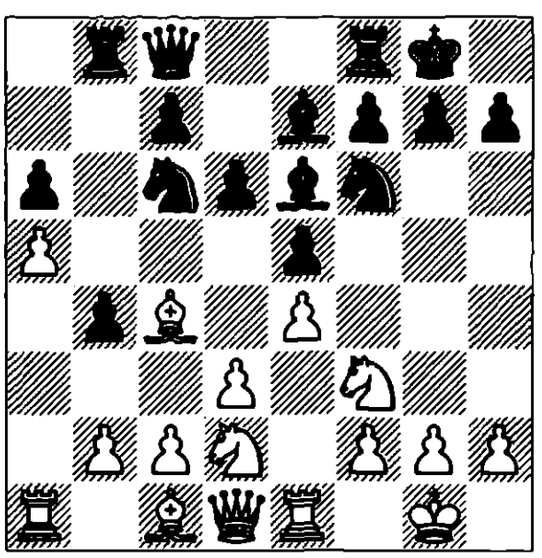
b312) Aronian gives 15 ♗xe7 ♘gxe7 16 ♘g5 ♘d4 17 ♗a2 b3! 18 ♗xb3 ♘xb3 19 cxb3 ♘c6 as absolutely fine for Black.

b313) The principled 15 ♗d2 f5 16 ♘e3 is critical, fighting back on the light squares after 16...♗xb3 17 cxb3 fxe4 18 dxe4.

b32) A couple of weeks later, Leko tried to improve on this in his rapid game versus Anand in Monaco, only to lose again. That game continued 14 d4 (Aronian had also given this as an improvement) 14...exd4 (14...♗g4!? – Aronian) 15 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 16 ♕xd4 ♘g8 17 ♗f4 f5! (the model plan) 18 exf5 ♗f6 19 ♕d3 ♗xf5 20 ♕g3 ♗g6 21 ♗g5 ♖b5! 22 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 23 f3 ♘h5 24 ♕h4 ♘f4 and again the powerful knight on f4 defined Black's clear advantage. Note the rook on b5 as well, operating laterally along the fifth rank. Black won in pretty straightforward fashion in Leko-Anand, Monaco rpd 2006.

12...♖e8

12...♖d8 has been played by some very strong players, but it seems that the state of the art in this line is 12...♖b8 *(D)*:



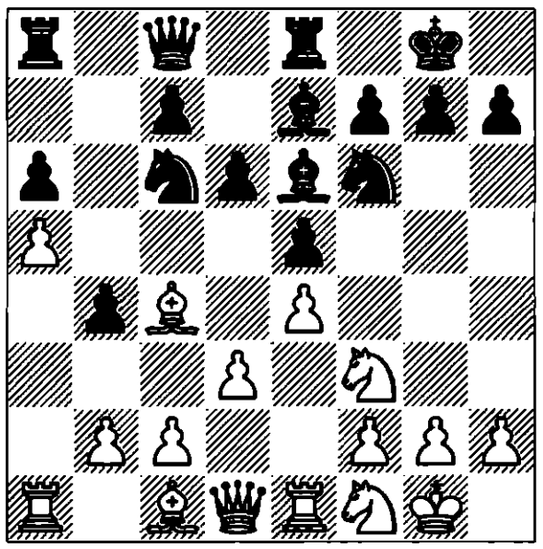
a) 13 ♘f1 h6 14 ♘e3 ♖e8 leads to play reminiscent of the main line.

b) 13 b3 ♘d7 14 ♘f1 ♗f6 15 ♘e3 g6 16 ♗b2 ♗xc4 17 ♘xc4 (17 dxc4!?) 17...♖e8 (at the press conference Ponomariov claimed Black was slightly better already, because of the weakness of the a5-pawn) 18 d4 exd4 19 ♘xd4 ♘ce5 (19...♗xd4!? 20 ♗xd4 d5! wins material, but obviously involves a certain risk as Black's kingside is weakened now) 20 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 21 ♖b1 ♕b7 22 f3 ♘f6 23 ♕d2 c5? (a tactical oversight in a good position) 24 ♘f5! and White suddenly had a near-decisive attack in Ponomariov-Bacrot, Sofia 2006.

13 ♘f1 *(D)*

This well-known regrouping at least demonstrates the advantages of having played ♖e1 (a tempo which White tries to save in the comparable Line 7F).

13 b3 leads to similar play; e.g., 13...♗f8 14 ♗b2 h6 15 h3 ♖b8 16 ♘f1 g6 17 ♘e3 ♗g7 18 ♘d2 ♗xc4 19 dxc4 ♘d4 20 ♘d5 ♘xd5 21 exd5 c5 22 dxc6 ♕xc6 23 ♗xd4 exd4 and although White later won in Kasimdzhanov-Grishchuk, Tripoli FIDE KO 2004, he can hardly claim any advantage here.


B

13...h6 14 ♘e3 ♗f8 15 b3 g6

The immediate 15...♘d8 16 ♗d2 ♖b8 17 ♘h4 c6 (threatening to trap the bishop with ...d5!) 18 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 19 ♘c4 ♘d7 20 ♕f3 g6 21 ♕g3 ♗g7 was also fine for Black in Hou-Wang Yu, Beijing 2005. He is finally ready for the ...d5 thrust.

16 ♗b2 ♗g7 17 ♕d2 ♖b8 18 h3 ♘d8 19 ♘h2 ♗xc4 20 bxc4 ♘e6

Development is concluded and chances are roughly equal.

Conclusion:

After 10 d3 we enter what for the last couple of years has been the main battleground of the Anti-Marshall lines. In a recent issue of *New In Chess Magazine,* Leko explained that probably not even the strongest players in the world have a clue what's really going on in those positions! We shall not pretend that we have managed to penetrate to the heart of the matter here. We can only refer to recent practice, where Black has been scoring rather well, suggesting that the positions are fully sound and satisfactory for him.

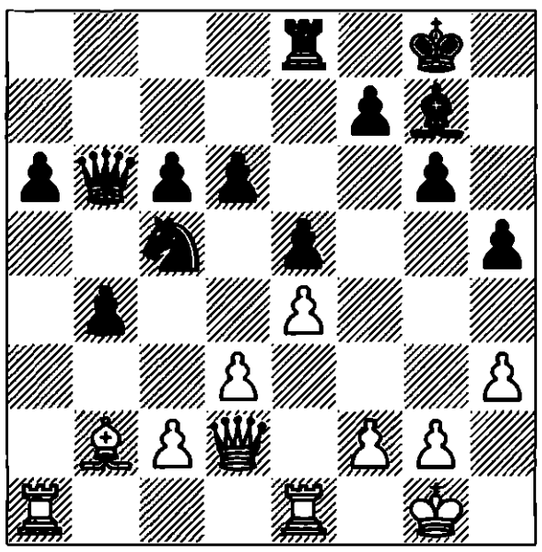
Illustrative Game 21

Hraček – Bacrot
Bundesliga 2003/4

21 ♘hg4 ♘d7 22 ♘d5 c6 23 ♘b6?! ♘xb6 24 axb6 h5 25 ♘e3 ♖xb6 26 c5

This was what White had been planning. He has now unbalanced the position somewhat but not really in his favour.

26...♘xc5 27 ♘c4 ♕c7 28 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 *(D)*


W

It seems that this position is easier to play for Black.

29 d4 ♘e6 30 ♖a4 a5 31 ♖ea1

31 dxe5 ♘c5 32 ♗d4 ♗xe5! also ends up with an advantage for Black; e.g., 33 ♖aa1 a4 ∓.

31...exd4 32 ♖xa5 ♘c7 33 ♕f4 c5 34 ♖a7 c4 35 ♕f3

35 ♖1a6!? can be met coolly with 35...♕b8!.

35...♖f8 36 ♖7a4 ♖b8 37 ♖a7 ♖b7 38 ♖xb7 ♕xb7

Now the black pawn-phalanx is definitely the dominant feature of the position.

39 ♖b1 ♕c6 40 ♗c1 ♕c5 41 ♗d2

And now an instructive finish:

41...b3! 42 cxb3 c3! 43 ♗c1?

This loses immediately, but 43 ♗f4 ♘e6 44 b4 ♕b5 also looks fairly hopeless for White.

43...d3! 0-1

The cute point is 44 ♕xd3 c2, when the b1-rook is trapped.

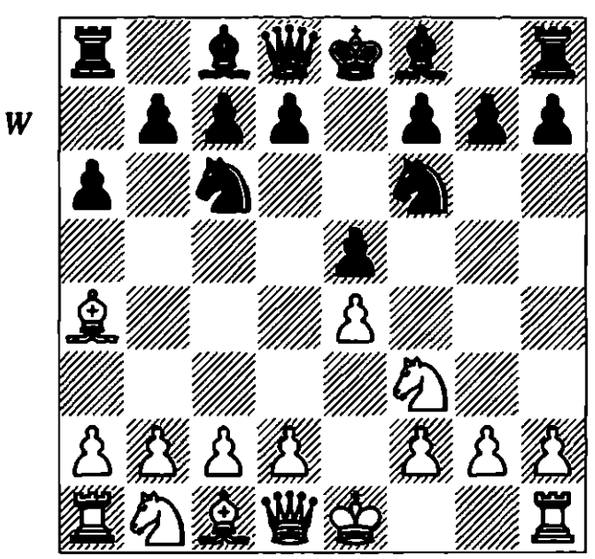
7 5th and 6th Move Alternatives

Time is nature's way of keeping everything from happening at once.
WOODY ALLEN

In this chapter we shall examine White's deviations on his 5th or 6th move. They are not considered critical by theory, and are a quite diverse bunch. The lines range in character from brutal violence to rather toothless subtlety, but most lead to semi-closed games with a typical 'Spanish' flavour. We feel that they are in general somewhat underestimated. If White knows what he is doing, it seems that most of these lines can be turned into dangerous weapons.

Ruy Lopez Sidelines, Overview and Move-Orders

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6)



Most of the lines we shall examine here exist in two separate but similar versions – one arising after a characteristic 5th move and another arising when the same move is played after 5 0-0 ♗e7 (e.g. there are two versions of the Worrall Attack: 5 ♕e2 and 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♕e2).

As a matter of fact the two versions for us will appear all but indistinguishable as we shall offer White a transposition he shouldn't turn down.

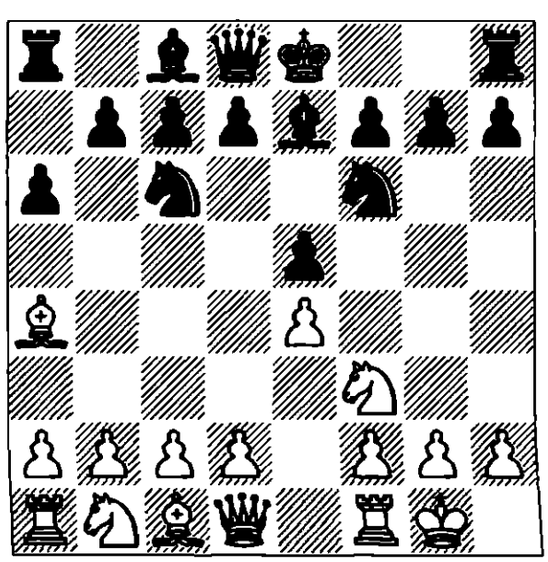
5 0-0

This move-order has some obvious advantages for White. In general castling is such an obvious move that any of Black's replies will reveal more information about his plans. If we ignore some rare and rather exotic ideas, the price White has to pay for this more flexible move-order is to allow Black to play the Open Variation, 5...♘xe4.

We shall consider the following alternatives: 5 ♕e2 (Lines 7A, 7B and 7C), 5 d4 (Line 7D), 5 ♘c3 (Line 7E) and 5 d3 (Line 7F).

This is a quite varied collection, and it's hard to say anything meaningful that applies to them all. Against most of them, we are going to recommend the reply 5...♗e7, challenging White to find a better move than 6 0-0 (which of course would transpose). This may be a slightly sub-optimal approach as against quite a few of White's quieter 5th moves, Black might well consider a more active deployment of his dark-squared bishop – either on c5 or, after 5...d6 and 6...g6, fianchettoing it to g7. However, it is fully sound and has the practical benefit of reducing Black's workload.

5...♗e7 *(D)*



Now when Black has turned down his chance to enter the Open Variation, why would White prefer to play something other than 6 ♖e1, leading to the standard Closed lines?

We suspect that the most common motivation is a wish to avoid some theory – in particular the Marshall Attack. In addition there is the element of surprise. The lines examined here may be somewhat weaker than the main lines, but they do carry some punch and are clearly less known.

Finally, we should not forget the most obvious explanation: White can have the firm belief that his choice is a better move than 6 ♖e1 – after all it is not a classical developing move. One can easily imagine lines where the rook would have been happier on another square than e1 – there are even lines where f1 would have been the ideal square for the rook.

6 c3?!

This may be a slip of the hand or an attempt to save a tempo over some main lines by getting the light-squared bishop directly to c2 (and not via b3, which often turns out to be a very temporary stop).

We give it as the main line in this introduction as it occurs quite frequently at the more modest levels of play. In addition, most alternatives are extremely transpositional – at least seen from our perspective:

a) 6 d4 exd4 – *5 d4 exd4 6 0-0 ♗e7.*

b) 6 ♘c3 b5 7 ♗b3 – *5 ♘c3 b5 6 ♗b3 ♗e7 7 0-0.*

c) 6 ♕e2 b5 7 ♗b3 – *5 ♕e2 b5 6 ♗b3 ♗e7 7 0-0.*

d) 6 ♗xc6 dxc6, the Steenwijker Variation, is considered in connection with the other Exchange variations in Part 4 (Lines 9B, 9C and 9D).

e) It seems that 6 ♕e1?! is the only independent move left to be investigated. That was not done in the game G.Čabrilo-Ermenkov, Durres 2001 where after 6...b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4 ♕c7 the players agreed to a draw.

6...♘xe4

This must be the critical test.

We are not sure what to make of it when our database claims that Dolmatov-Psakhis, Rostov 1993 continued 6...0-0 7 ♖e1 b5 8 ♗b3 but we strongly suspect a data error. 6...b5 and 6...0-0 7 ♖e1 b5 both challenge White to prove that he has gained something by getting his bishop to c2 in one go. Maybe this isn't such a great a achievement for White, but if you don't think so, why then play 6 c3?

7 ♖e1

White can win back the pawn in other ways but they all lead to endgames of the same general type:

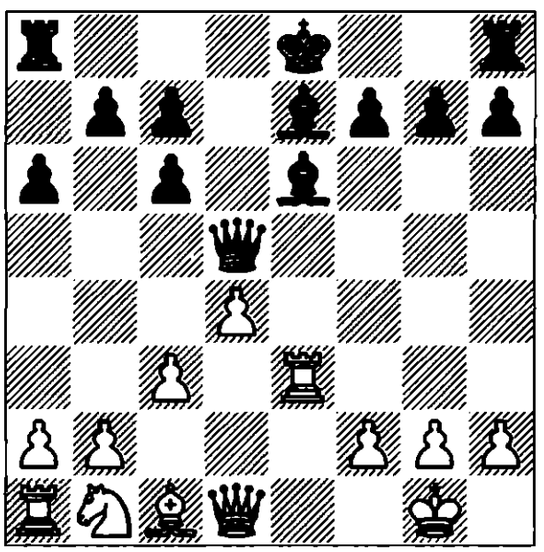
a) 7 ♗xc6 dxc6 8 ♘xe5 0-0 9 d4 c5 10 ♕f3 ♘g5!? 11 ♗xg5 ♗xg5 12 dxc5 ♕e7 13 ♘d3 ♗e6 14 ♘a3 ♖ad8 15 ♖fe1 ♕d7 16 ♘e5 ♕d5 17 ♖ad1 ♕xc5 ∓ Blank-Geller, Bad Wörishofen seniors Wch 1992.

b) 7 ♕e2 ♘c5 8 ♗xc6 dxc6 9 ♘xe5 0-0 10 d4 ♘d7 11 ♘d2 ♘xe5 12 ♕xe5 ♗e6 is slightly better for Black, Thomas-Reshevsky, Nottingham 1936.

7...♘c5 8 ♗xc6

8 d4 ♘xa4 9 ♕xa4 exd4 10 ♗g5 dxc3 11 ♘xc3 0-0 ∓ Ikica-Emelin, Zadar 2002.

8...dxc6 9 ♘xe5 ♘d3 10 ♘xd3 ♕xd3 11 ♖e3 ♕d5 12 d4 ♗e6 *(D)*



This position is superficially reminiscent of those arising from the Exchange Variation. However, White's central pawn is on the d-file rather than the e-file and this changes the evaluation substantially. This position is very slightly better for Black. His bishop-pair is more important than his slightly degraded pawn-structure. The doubled c-pawns are not a target and in contrast to the normal exchange variations that we shall examine in Chapters 8 and 9, White has no kingside majority.

Chapter Guide

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6
Line 7A: 5 ♕e2 (5...b5 6 ♗b3 ♗e7) 7 0-0 158
Line 7B: 5 ♕e2 b5 6 ♗b3 ♗e7 7 a4!? 162
Line 7C: 5 ♕e2 b5 6 ♗b3 ♗e7 (7 c3) 164
Line 7D: 5 d4!? 166

Line 7E: 5 ♘c3 169
Line 7F: 5 d3 171

(For 5 ♗xc6, see Lines 9B, 9C and 9D).

7A: Worrall Attack 5 ♕e2

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6)

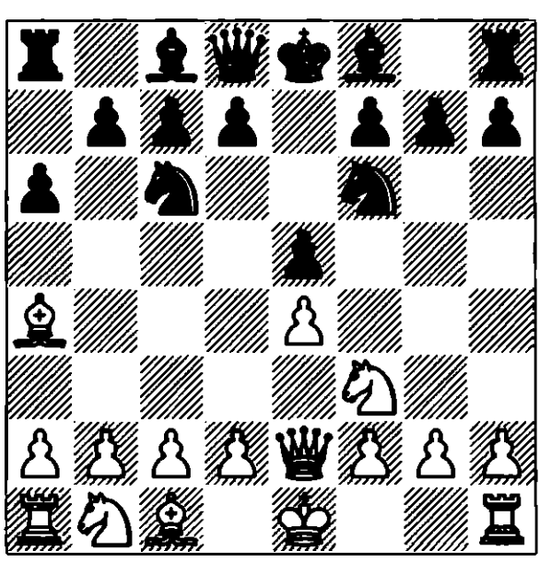
5 ♕e2 *(D)*

This is the Worrall Attack. Although its originator lost repeatedly with knight odds against Morphy, it is a very reasonable way to avoid the most theoretical lines in the Ruy Lopez. An alternative move-order is 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♕e2 b5 7 ♗b3 (– *5 ♕e2 b5 6 ♗b3 ♗e7 7 0-0*).

White's set-up is slightly less flexible than after 5 0-0 but in general the queen is nicely placed at e2. The queen move prepares a scheme of development with ♖d1 rather than the ♖e1 of the main lines. This arrangement of the major pieces on the central files is more typical of 1 d4 openings, but is very natural and should be respected.

Generally play will be reminiscent of the Closed main lines with White playing for central expansion with c3 and d4, but occasionally White will employ ideas from the Anderssen Variation (5 d3) and delay castling in order to launch a quick kingside attack. If Black plays an early ...♗c5, then ♘c3, d3 and ♗g5 may be interesting.

B



5...b5

This is Black's most popular move. Generally, Black must protect his own e-pawn or break the pin of his knight once the e4-pawn is protected. That said, it is quite possible to play 5...♗e7 too, as after 6 ♗xc6 dxc6, 7 ♘xe5?! is met by 7...♕d4, immediately winning back the pawn with good play for Black. A better attempt for White to take advantage of that move-order is 7 b3, with play reminiscent of the Steenwijker Variation of Chapter 9.

6 ♗b3 ♗e7

Black has sensible alternatives here, but this is a pragmatic choice for a player of the Closed Ruy Lopez as it usually leads to positions you have to be prepared for anyway (after 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♕e2).

7 0-0

7 a4 is the subject of Line 7B, while other lines where White delays castling can be quite tricky and are considered in Line 7C.

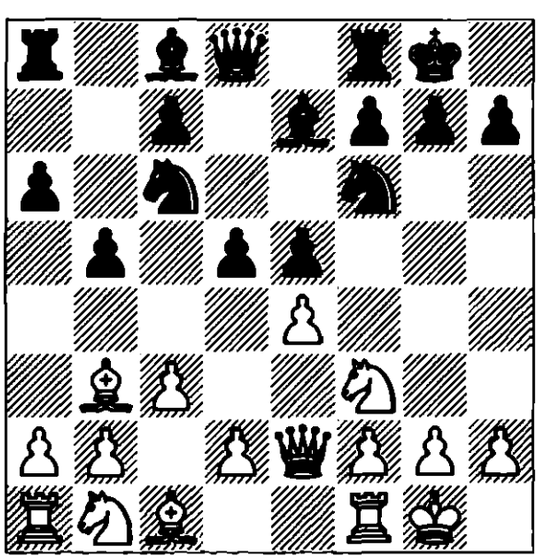
7...0-0 8 c3

The only alternative of any importance is 8 a4, which after 8...♗b7 9 c3 transposes to Line 7B (– *7 a4 ♗b7 8 c3 0-0 9 0-0*).

8...d5!? *(D)*

The more conservative 8...d6 9 ♖d1 ♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4 ♕c7 leads to standard Chigorin positions where White's chances should be slightly preferable.

W



This aggressive thrust, immediately grabbing space in the centre, is our recommended plan of action. If White accepts, it will lead to play reminiscent of the Marshall Attack.

9 d3

This sensible move is the almost universal choice. However, the critical test, for better or worse, has to be accepting the pawn with 9 exd5. Black then has a choice:

a) 9...♗g4!? was Keres's preference when he introduced the variation in the early 1940s:

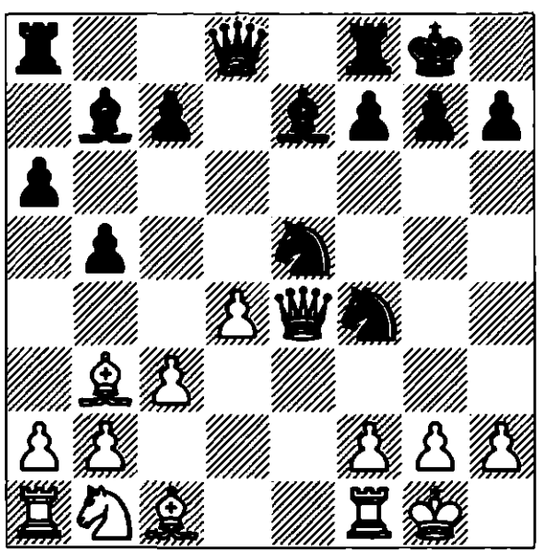
a1) 10 d3 ♘a5 11 ♗c2 ♕xd5 12 ♘bd2 ♘c6 and Black is fine.

a2) 10 h3 ♗xf3 11 ♕xf3 e4 12 ♕e2 ♘a5 13 ♗c2 ♕xd5 doesn't challenge Black either.

a3) 10 dxc6 e4 11 d4 exf3 12 gxf3 ♗h3!? (Keres's 12...♗h5 13 ♗f4 ♖e8 has also worked well for Black) and Black definitely has compensation, an evaluation the computers share. A nice practical demonstration is Oulo-Martinez, Thessaloniki OL 1984: 13 ♖d1 (13 ♖e1 ♖e8 is just as good for Black) 13...♗d6 14 ♗g5 ♕c8 15 ♗xf6 gxf6 16 ♘d2 ♔h8 17 ♔h1 ♗g2+ 18 ♔xg2 ♖g8+ 19 ♔f1 ♕h3+ 20 ♔e1 ♖ae8 21 ♘e4 ♗f4 22 ♕d3 f5 23 ♗xf7 fxe4 24 fxe4 ♖g1+ 25 ♔e2 ♕g4+ 26 ♕f3 ♖xe4+, when it was time for White to resign.

b) 9...♘xd5 also seems sufficient: 10 ♘xe5 ♘f4 (10...♘xe5 11 ♕xe5 ♗b7 followed by ...♗d6 is also interesting) 11 ♕e4 ♘xe5 12 d4 (12 ♕xa8? ♘e2+ 13 ♔h1 ♘d3 –+) 12...♗b7! *(D)*, when White has tried:

W



b1) 13 ♕xf4 ♘g6 14 ♕g4 ♔h8 15 ♗c2 f5 16 ♕h3 (16 ♗xf5? ♖xf5 17 ♕xf5 ♘h4 followed by ...♗xg2 gives Black a decisive attack) 16...♗d6 17 ♕h5 ♗f4 18 ♘d2 c5! gave Black a promising attack in Groszpeter-Lukacs, Budapest 1979.

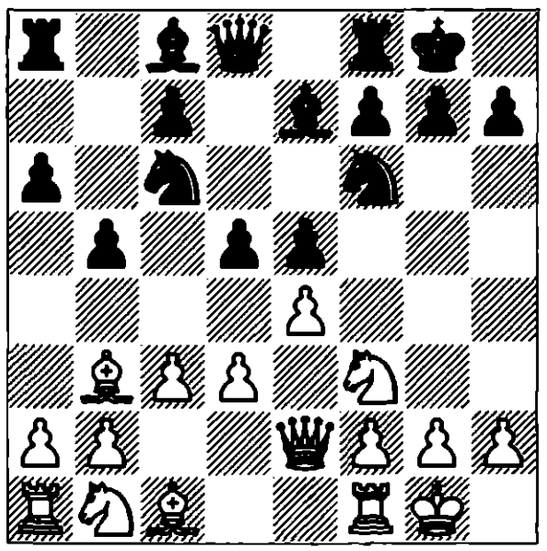
b2) 13 ♕xb7 ♘e2+ 14 ♔h1 ♘xc1 with a further split:

b21) 15 ♖xc1 ♘d3 16 ♖c2 ♗g5 17 ♘d2 (17 ♘a3 is met by 17...♕e7 followed by ...♖ae8) 17...♘xf2+ 18 ♔g1 ♗e3 19 ♕f3 ♘g4+ 20 ♔h1 ♘f2+ ends with a repetition.

b22) 15 dxe5 ♘d3 16 ♕e4 ♘xb2 17 ♗c2 (17 ♕c2 ♕d3 18 ♘d2 ♕xc2 19 ♗xc2 ♖ad8 ∓ Cao Sang-Lukacs, Budapest 1995) 17...g6 18 f4 ♕d7 (18...f5?! 19 ♕c6 ±) 19 f5 ♖ad8 and Black has enough counterplay.

We now return to 9 d3 *(D)*:

B



9...♗b7 10 ♘bd2

This is the obvious square for the knight. White remains flexible about where to put his rook. The alternatives should not be underestimated:

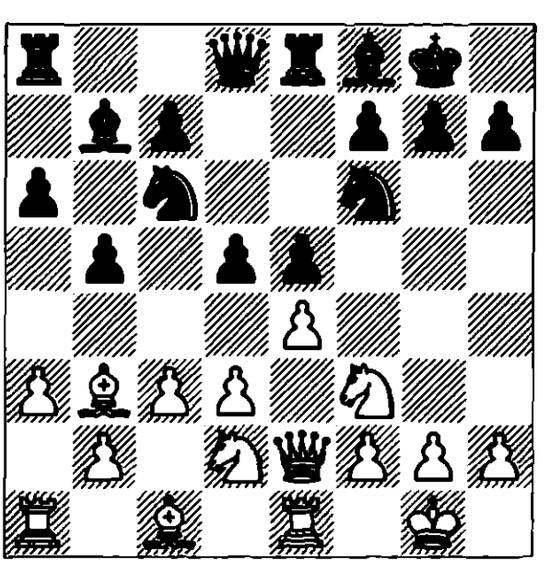
a) 10 exd5 ♘xd5 11 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 12 ♕xe5 ♕d7 13 ♘d2 (what else?) 13...♗d6 14 ♕e4 c5 15 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 16 ♕h4 f5 gave Black very good compensation for the pawn in Manik-Ostrowski, Tatry 1998.

b) 10 ♖d1 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 – *10 ♘bd2 ♖e8 11 ♖d1*.

c) 10 ♗g5!? ♘a5 11 ♗c2 dxe4 12 dxe4 ♘d7 13 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 14 ♘bd2 c5 15 ♖fd1 ♖fd8 and the players agreed to a draw in Mencinger-Mikac, Finkenstein 1993.

d) 10 ♖e1 is fairly popular but it seems slightly inconsistent to put the rook here rather than on d1. After 10...♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a3 *(D)* (12 ♘f1 ♘a5 13 ♗c2 c5 =) Black has several valid tries:

B



d1) 12...♘a5?! may look natural, but leads to complications that we advise Black to avoid: 13 ♗a2 c5 14 b4! ♘c6? (14...cxb4 15 axb4 ♘c6 is necessary, but still hard to play for Black; now White develops a menacing attack) 15 exd5 ♘xd5 16 ♘e4 cxb4 and Short has had the pleasure of demonstrating White's attacking potential after 17 ♘fg5! in two games against world-class opposition:

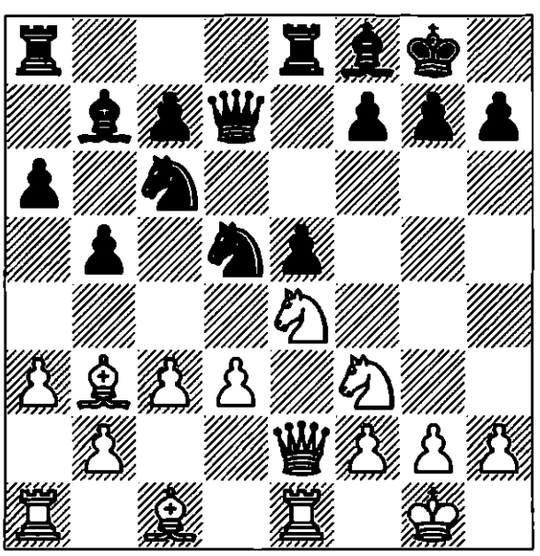
d11) 17...f6? 18 ♕h5 fxg5 19 ♘xg5 h6 20 ♕f7+ ♔h8 21 ♗xd5 ♗c5 22 ♕g6 ♗xf2+ 23 ♔h1 ♕xg5 24 ♗xg5 1-0 Short-I.Sokolov, London rpd 1995 (24...♗xe1 25 ♗f6! +–).

d12) 17...h6 18 ♕f3! hxg5 19 ♘xg5! ♕f6 20 ♕xd5! ♘d8 21 ♕d7 ♗c6 22 ♕h3 ± Short-Hübner, Manila IZ 1990.

d2) After the safe 12...h6!? White needs to improve on 13 ♗a2 ♕d7 14 exd5 ♘xd5 15 ♘e4 ♘f4 16 ♗xf4 exf4 17 ♕d2 ♕f5 18 h3 ♘e5 19 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 20 f3 ♖d8, when Black was better in Schekachev-Ibragimov, Moscow 1999.

d3) The sensible 12...♕d7!? 13 exd5 (13 ♗a2 ♖ad8 =) 13...♘xd5 seems to be Black's best. After 14 ♘e4 *(D)* Black can try:

B



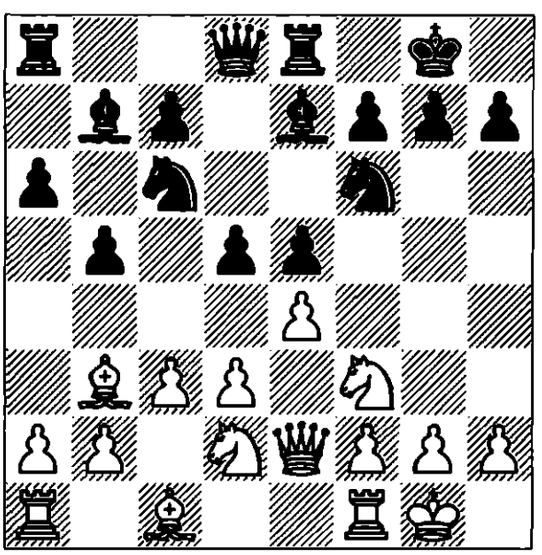
d31) 14...♘a5 15 ♗a2 c5 16 b4 cxb4 17 axb4 ♘c6 18 ♘fg5 gives White a rather dangerous initiative on the kingside; e.g., 18...f6? (18...h6 was obligatory, after which White replies 19 ♕h5!) 19 ♘xh7 ♔xh7 20 ♕h5+ ♔g8 21 ♖e3 ♘e7 22 ♖h3 ♕e6 23 ♗g5 fxg5 24 ♘xg5 1-0 J.Diaz-Van Riemsdijk, Cienfuegos 1991.

d32) 14...♖ad8 looks plausible. The game Short-Z.Almasi, Wijk aan Zee 1995 continued 15 ♗g5 ♗e7 (15...f6? 16 ♗xf6! +–) 16 ♖ad1 ♕g4!? 17 h3 ♕h5 18 ♗a2 h6 19 ♗d2 ♕g6 20 ♘g3 ♗f8 21 d4 and here, instead of 21...♘f4? 22 ♕f1 e4 23 ♘h4!, which gave White a clear advantage in the game, Almasi should have gone for 21...exd4! 22 ♕xe8 ♖xe8 23 ♖xe8 ♘de7! (White's rook is in trouble); e.g., 24 cxd4 ♕c2 25 ♖b1 ♘xd4 ∓.

d33) 14...f5 looks risky, but worked well for Black in the heavyweight battle Tiviakov-Grishchuk, Linares 1999: 15 ♗a2 ♔h8 16 ♘fg5 h6 17 ♕h5 fxe4 18 dxe4 ♘f6 19 ♘f7+ ♔h7 20 ♘g5+ ½-½.

10...♖e8 *(D)*

W



Common sense indicates that Black should be fine here. He has completed his development with an active central position. Admittedly he has a backward c-pawn, but it is placed on a closed line and the main reason Black is eager to move it, is that he needs a queenside square for his queen.

11 ♖d1

We give this thematic move as the main line. White underlines the fact that the black queen isn't ideally positioned on the d-file.

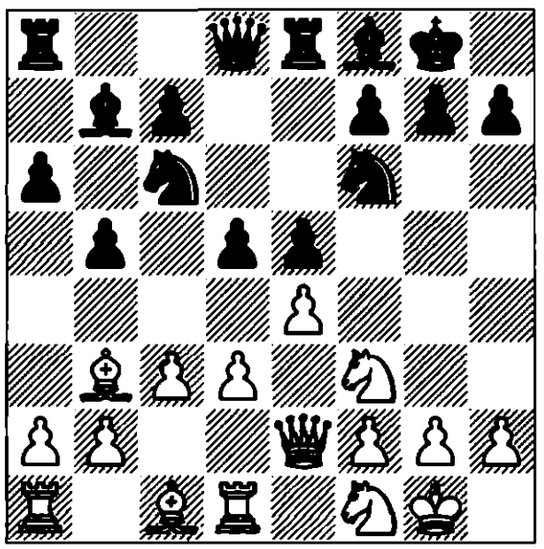
Actually 11 a3 has been played more frequently. That move too marginally improves White's position but we find it hard to believe that White can really fight for the initiative with such a move. Indeed, after 11...♗f8 we cannot see that White has demonstrated anything resembling an advantage in any of the top encounters:

a) 12 ♗a2 ♘b8 13 ♖e1 ♘bd7 14 ♘f1 c5 15 exd5 ♗xd5 16 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 17 ♗d2 g6 18 ♖ad1 ♗g7 = Short-Timman, Amsterdam 1992.

b) 12 ♖d1 ♘b8 13 ♘f1 ♘bd7 14 ♘e3 c6 15 ♘f5 ♕c7 16 h3 ♖ad8 17 ♗g5 h6 18 ♗h4 g6 19

♘e3 ♗g7 is equal, J.Polgar-Grishchuk, Moscow 2002.

11...♗f8 12 ♘f1 *(D)*



12...♘a5

This is only one of several possible ways of organizing Black's queenside. A Breyer-style re-development initiated by 12...h6 also seems perfectly sound. Ehlvest-Anand, Riga 1995 continued 13 a3 ♘b8 14 ♘e3 dxe4 15 dxe4 ♘bd7 16 ♘d5 and now the Indian grabbed the initiative with the strong 16...♘c5! ∓.

13 ♗c2 c5 14 ♗g5

14 ♘g3 g6 15 h3 ♕b6 16 a3 c4 17 ♗e3 ♕c6 18 d4 exd4 19 ♘xd4 ♕c7 and Black was at least equal in Sandipan-Ibragimov, Guntur 2000.

14...h6 15 ♗d2

15 ♗h4 d4 16 cxd4 cxd4 17 ♘3d2 ♗c8! (a nice move; the bishop belongs on e6 in this structure and at the same time Black vacates b7 for the manoeuvre ...♘b7-c5, after which the knight reaches its ideal square as well) 18 ♘b3 ♘b7 19 a4 ♗d7 20 axb5 ♗xb5 21 ♘bd2 ♘c5 and Black had a comfortable advantage in Barlov-Pyhälä, Helsinki 1990 as he had made a lot of progress on the queenside while White was still on his starting blocks on the other flank.

15...♕c7 16 ♘g3 ♖ad8 17 h4 c4

Black's advantage in space, his central supremacy and active pieces give him a distinct plus.

Conclusion:

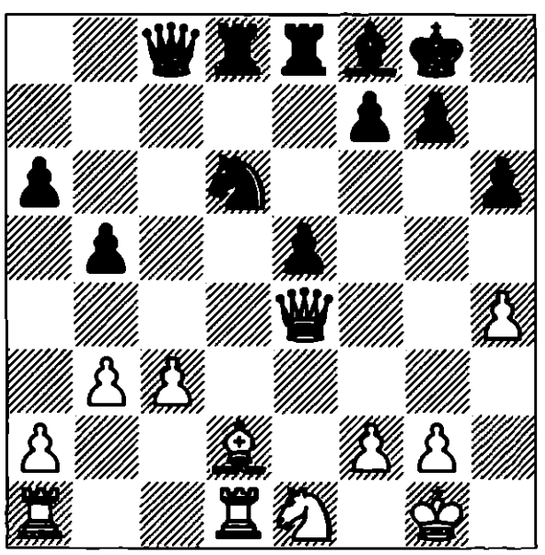
These lines don't promise White a genuine opening advantage. We recommend energetic play with a quick ...d5. However, as long as White retains his central foothold on e4, he can safely play for a long-term initiative on the kingside by slowly transferring his pieces in that direction. That means that Black should stay alert and continue to play resourcefully, not being lulled into idleness.

Illustrative Game 22

Hübner – Geller

Palma de Mallorca IZ 1970

18 b3 cxd3 19 ♗xd3 ♕c8 20 ♗c2 dxe4 21 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 22 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 23 ♕xe4 ♘b7 24 ♘e1 ♘d6 *(D)*



By now it's obvious that Black's pieces are better coordinated and that White's pawn-structure leaves something to be desired.

25 ♕e2 ♘f5 26 h5 e4 27 ♘c2 ♖d3 28 ♕g4 ♗c5 29 ♘b4

This allows a deadly stroke, but there really was no satisfactory defence:

a) After 29 ♗f4, the simple 29...♖xc3 is good enough for a win.

b) 29 ♗e1 is met by 29...♘g3; e.g., 30 ♕xc8 ♖xc8 31 ♘d4 ♘xh5 32 ♖xd3 exd3 33 ♖d1 ♘f4 34 g3 ♗xd4 35 cxd4 ♖c1! 36 ♖xc1 ♘e2+ 37 ♔g2 ♘xc1 −+.

29...♖g3! 30 ♕f4 ♗d6 31 fxg3 ♗xf4 32 ♗xf4 e3 33 ♖d3 e2 34 ♖e1 ♕c5+ 35 ♔h2 ♕f2 36 ♘c2 ♘h4!

If there was any doubt that Black was winning, it's definitely gone by now.

37 gxh4 ♕xf4+ 38 ♔g1 ♕xh4 39 ♖h3 ♕g5 40 ♘d4 ♕d2 41 ♔f2 ♕f4+ 42 ♔g1 ♕d2 43 ♔f2 ♕f4+ 44 ♔g1 a5 45 a3 ♖e4 46 ♘xe2 ♕e5

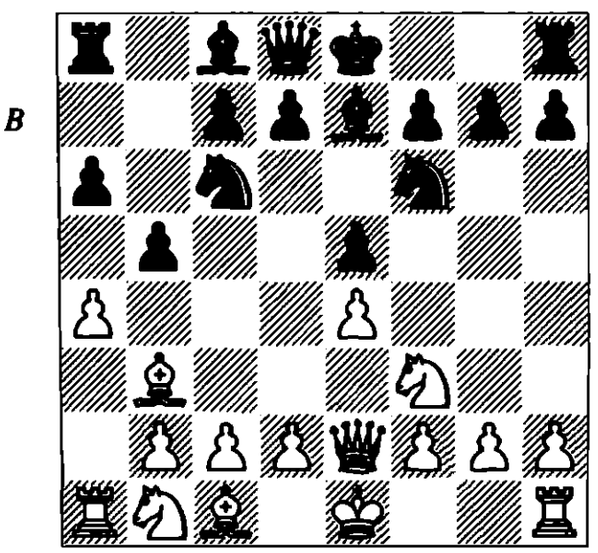
47 ♔f1 ♕d5 48 ♖f3 ♕xh5 49 ♖d1 ♕e5 50 ♖f2 f6 51 ♖d2 ♖e3 52 ♖d4 ♔h7 53 ♖d1 ♕e4 54 ♖e1 ♕c2 55 b4 a4 56 g4 ♕e4 57 ♖g2 ♖f3+ 0-1

7B: Worrall Attack 7 a4

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 ♕e2 b5 6 ♗b3 ♗e7)

7 a4!? *(D)*

This is quite an interesting attempt to attack Black's weakened b-pawn. However, it isn't under direct attack as long as White's queen needs to protect his e-pawn. Alternatives are analysed in Line 7C.


B

7...♗b7!

As we shall see, it will be quite a long time before White is ready to pick up the b-pawn.

8 c3

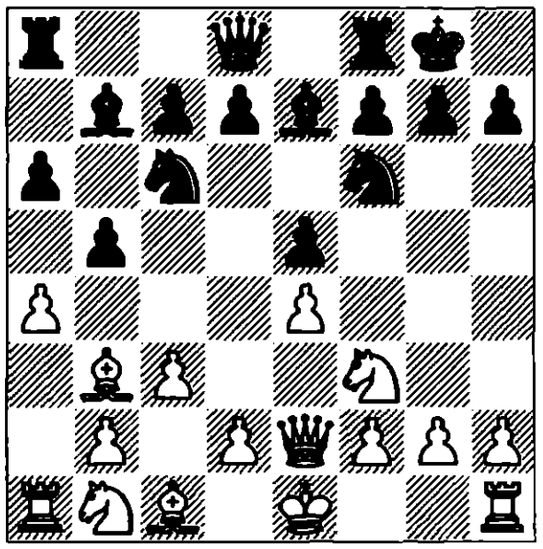
a) 8 0-0 will usually transpose after 8...0-0 9 c3.

b) The immediate 8 axb5 axb5 9 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 10 ♘c3 is not to be feared. After 10...0-0 11 ♘xb5 ♘a5 12 d3 (even less promising is 12 ♘xc7 ♕d8 13 ♘d5 ♘xb3 14 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 15 cxb3 d5 ∓) 12...♘xb3 13 cxb3 d5, Black is extremely active; e.g., 14 exd5 ♕a5+ 15 ♘c3 ♘xd5 16 0-0 ♘xc3 17 bxc3 ♗xf3 18 gxf3 ♕xc3 ∓ Zeller-Hector, Bundesliga 2001/2.

8...0-0 *(D)*

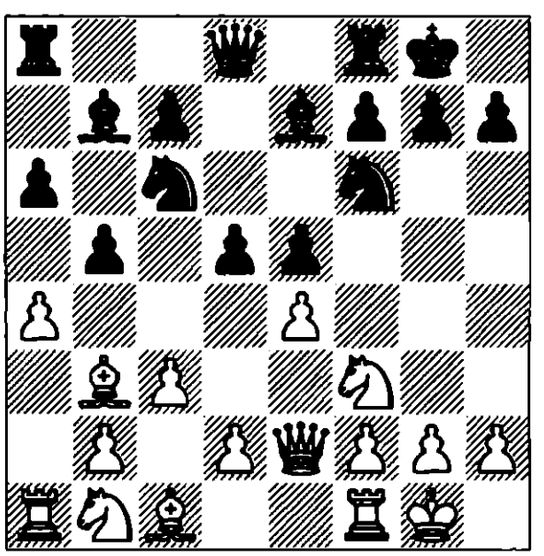
9 0-0

In Line 7C we shall see some lines where White delays castling in favour of an accelerated knight-hop. That is possible here too, but it seems not to fit well with a4, as it now is easier for Black to generate central or queenside activity.


W

After 9 d3 ♖e8 10 ♗g5 h6 11 ♗h4, we believe that rather than 11...♗f8 12 ♘bd2 ♕e7?! 13 ♘f1 ♘a5 14 ♗c2 d5 15 ♘e3 ♕e6 16 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 17 b4 dxe4 18 dxe4 ♕c6 19 0-0 ♘c4 20 ♘xc4 bxc4 21 ♘d2 ± Tiviakov-Harus, Kazan 1985, Black should play 11...♘a5 12 ♗c2 d5 13 b4 dxe4 14 dxe4 ♘c4, which looks comfortable for him. The typical relieving manoeuvre ...♘h5 is on Black's agenda.

9...d5! *(D)*


W

If in the open games Black can play ...d5 with impunity, it signals that he is at least equal.

10 d3

Now we shall have another closed position where understanding will be more important than exact knowledge. It will also be comfortably equal for Black.

a) White should definitely avoid 10 exd5 ♘a5 11 ♗c2 (or 11 ♗a2 e4) 11...e4 followed by ...♗xd5, when Black has all the play.

b) The critical line must be 10 d4 dxe4 11 ♘xe5 ♗d6 12 ♗f4 ♕e8 13 axb5 axb5 14 ♖xa8

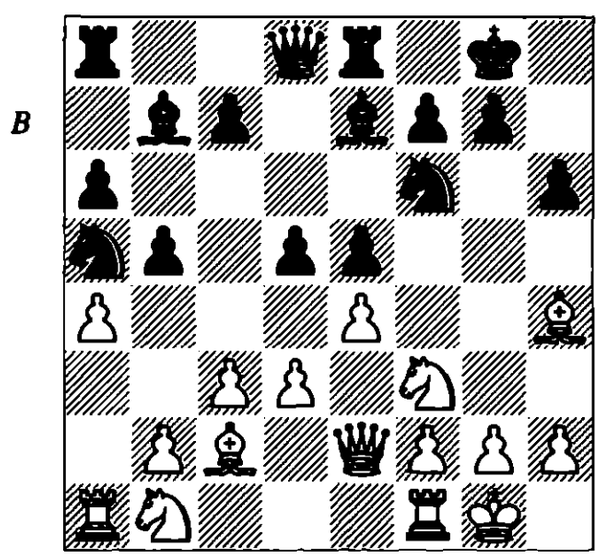
♗xa8 and now Tiviakov-Bareev, Madrid 1994 was agreed drawn rather than testing the tactical mess resulting from 15 ♘g4 ♗xf4 16 ♘xf6+ gxf6 17 ♕g4+ ♗g5 18 h4. It seems that after 18...♕c8 19 ♕g3 ♕f5 20 hxg5 ♕xg5! 21 ♕xc7 e3! Black's counterplay is good enough for a draw.

10...♖e8 11 ♗g5

Releasing the tension with 11 axb5 axb5 12 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 does not help White: 13 ♗g5 (13 ♘bd2 ½-½ Filipowicz-Janetschek, Siegen OL 1970) 13...♘a5 14 ♗c2 ♘d7 15 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 16 b4 dxe4 17 ♘fd2 ♘b7 18 dxe4 ♘d6 19 ♘a3 ♖b8 = Sievers-Lukacs, Budapest 1992.

11...♘a5 12 ♗c2 h6 13 ♗h4 *(D)*

13 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 14 axb5 axb5 15 exd5 ♗xd5 16 b4 ♘c6 17 ♘bd2 was fairly equal in Seidman-Bisguier, New York 1974. Some would claim that Black, who has the two bishops, has the future. However, the dark-squared bishop will probably be kept busy by the task of covering the weak c5-square.



13...♘h5!?

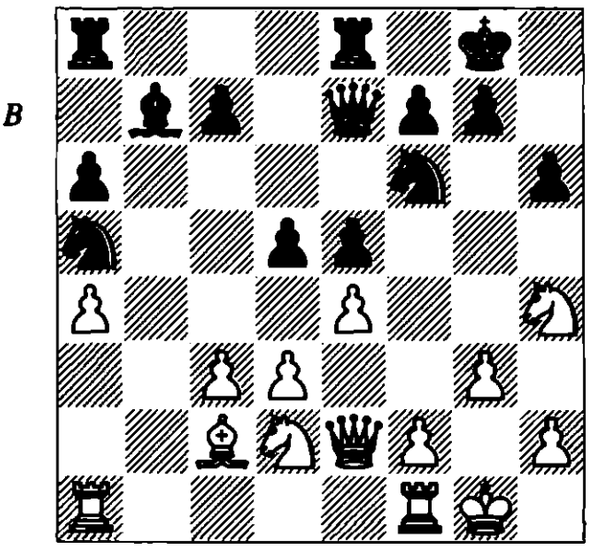
This is complicated, and if you don't trust our analysis, 13...♕d6 seems like sensible preparation for the knight manoeuvre.

14 ♗xe7

To evaluate Black's last move, it is necessary to calculate 14 ♘xe5!? ♘f4 15 ♕f3 ♗xh4 16 ♕xf4 ♗f6 17 ♘f3 dxe4 18 dxe4 ♘c4. Evaluating the resulting position is a separate and quite difficult task. We believe Black has compensation for the pawn.

14...♕xe7 15 g3 b4 16 ♘bd2 ♘f6 17 ♘h4?! bxc3 18 bxc3 *(D)*

18...♕c5



It is now apparent that White's queenside pawn-formation was too weakened to be left to take care of itself.

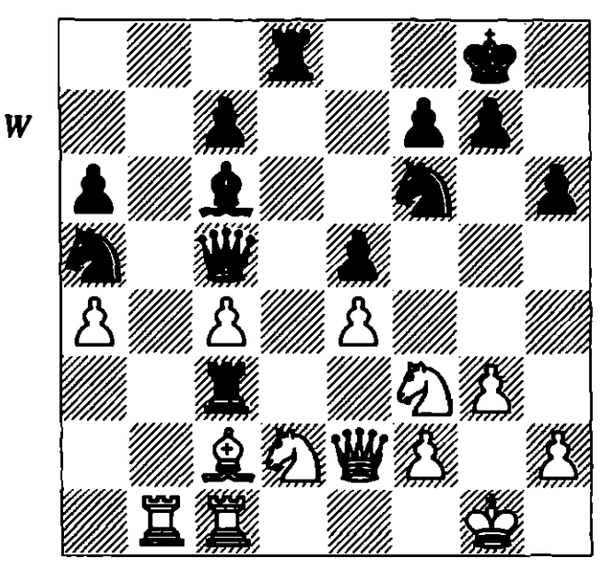
Conclusion:

7 a4 can hardly be a bad move, but we believe we have demonstrated that Black has comfortable equality if he plays accurately for the next few moves. It is also important that White cannot simply defend e4 and bring his pieces over to the kingside.

Illustrative Game 23

Bremond – Flear
French Cht 1989

19 ♖fc1 ♖ad8 20 ♗d1 dxe4 21 dxe4 ♖d7 22 ♘hf3 ♖ed8 23 ♖ab1 ♖d3 24 c4 ♗c6 25 ♗c2 ♖c3 *(D)*



White's queenside is now disintegrating without any real compensation elsewhere.

26 ♗b3 ♖xc1+ 27 ♖xc1 ♘xe4!

A simple combination on the theme of overloading. The d2-knight has too many duties.

28 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 29 ♕xe4 ♘xb3 30 ♖b1 ♘d4 31 ♖e1 f5 32 ♕b7 ♘xf3+ 33 ♕xf3 e4

In addition to his extra pawn, Black has the more active position and is likely to pick up White's remaining queenside pawns.

34 ♕h5 ♖d2 35 ♖e3 ♕xc4 36 ♔g2 ♕c5 37 ♔h3 ♔h7 38 g4 ♖xf2 39 ♖g3 g6 40 ♕h4 f4 41 ♖b3 g5 42 ♕h5 ♕c4 0-1

7C: Worrall Attack, Delayed Castling

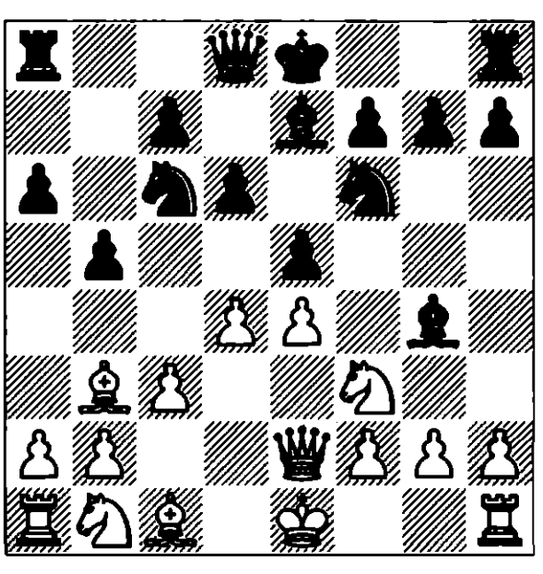
(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 ♕e2 b5 6 ♗b3 ♗e7)

7 c3

At first this just appears less flexible than immediate castling. After all, White takes away a natural square from his knight before there is any need for it (it should not be necessary to remind the reader that this is the foundation for the Marshall Attack).

7 d4 may not be an error in a strict sense, but after 7...d6 White has to limit his ambitions to the harmless 8 dxe5 ♘xe5 9 ♘xe5 dxe5; e.g., 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♖d1 ♕e8 12 a4 ♗b7 13 ♘c3 c6 14 h3 ½-½ Djurić-Kosasih, Jakarta 2001 rather than trying to build a centre with 8 c3, when Black can exploit White's over-extended centre with 8...♗g4 *(D)*. Then it seems that White is hard-pressed even to keep the fight going:

W



a) 9 ♗d5?! ♘xd5 10 exd5 ♘a5 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 ♕xe5 0-0 ∓ Jaffe-Kupchik, Havana 1913.

b) 9 dxe5 ♘xe5 10 h3 ♘xf3+ 11 gxf3 ♗h5 12 ♗f4 0-0 13 ♘d2 ♘d7 14 ♕e3 ♘c5 15 0-0-0 is unclear, A.Ivanov-Kotliar, St Martin 1992.

c) 9 d5 ♘a5 10 ♗c2 c6 11 b4 cxd5 12 bxa5 dxe4 13 ♗xe4 d5 14 h3 dxe4 15 hxg4 exf3 16 ♕xf3 e4 ∓ T.Pähtz-Gabriel, Bundesliga 2001/2.

d) 9 ♗e3 d5! 10 exd5 ♘xd5 is fine for Black:

d1) 11 dxe5 ♘xe5 12 0-0 ♘xf3+ 13 gxf3 ♗e6 ∓.

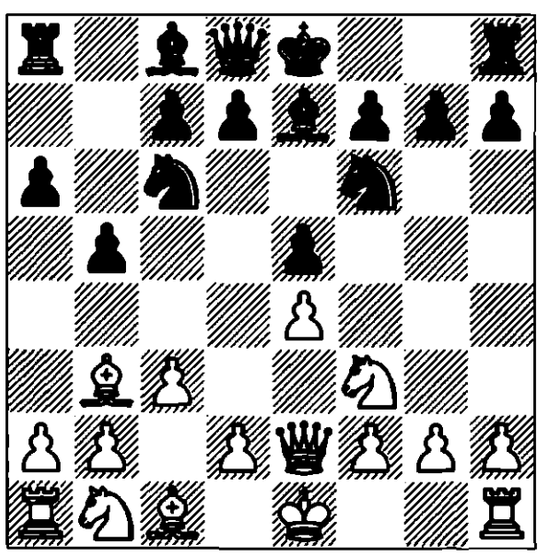
d2) 11 h3 exd4! 12 cxd4 (12 hxg4?! dxe3 13 fxe3 ♕d6! ∓) 12...♗h5 (12...♗e6!? L.B.Hansen) 13 0-0 0-0 and now:

d21) 14 ♘bd2?! ♖e8 15 ♖ac1 ♘a5 16 ♗c2 ♗b4! 17 ♘e4 ♘c4 ∓ Tiviakov-Z.Almasi, Groningen 1995.

d22) 14 ♘c3 ♘xc3 15 bxc3 ♖e8 is equal, while 15...♗a3!? is also possible.

We now return to 7 c3 *(D)*:

B



7...d5!? 8 d3

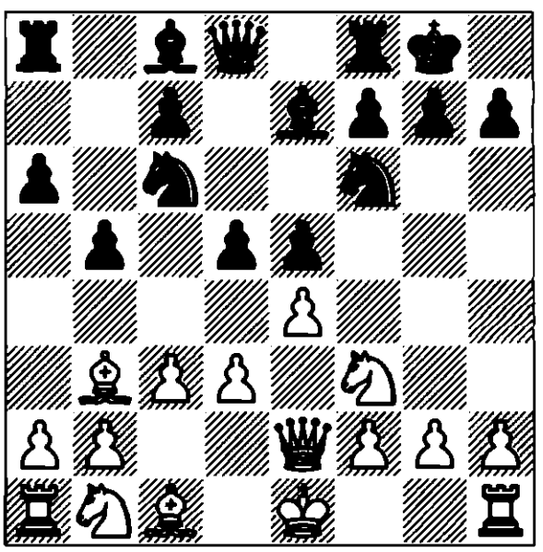
This quiet move could be the prelude to a quite poisonous plan where White plays ♘d2-f1-g3 before castling, with or without h3 and g4, looking for an attack. After White castles, he has to waste a tempo on ♖e1/♖d1 before he can complete the ♘f1-hop. However, if Black plays actively and avoids combining a quick ...0-0 with ...h6, he should experience no real problems.

The obvious alternative is to accept the pawn with 8 exd5 ♘xd5 (the computer advocates 8...♘a5!?, which also looks very interesting) 9 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 10 ♕xe5 with a position reminiscent of the Marshall Attack. The fact that neither player has castled yet should cancel out quickly as both must soon evacuate their kings from the open centre. So compared to the standard Marshall, the main difference will be that Black will try to gain time by chasing White's

queen rather than his rook and that Black is more likely to gain control over the open e-file. Play can continue 10...♘f6 11 0-0 0-0 12 d4 ♗d6 13 ♕g5 ♖e8, when Black has good compensation; e.g., 14 ♘a3 h6 15 ♕g6 ♗e6 16 ♕d3 ♗xa3 17 bxa3 c5 18 ♕d1 cxd4 19 cxd4 ♗c4 20 ♗xc4 bxc4 and Black's compensation was not in doubt in Al.Rodriguez-Sorin, Salta 1995.

8...0-0 *(D)*

W



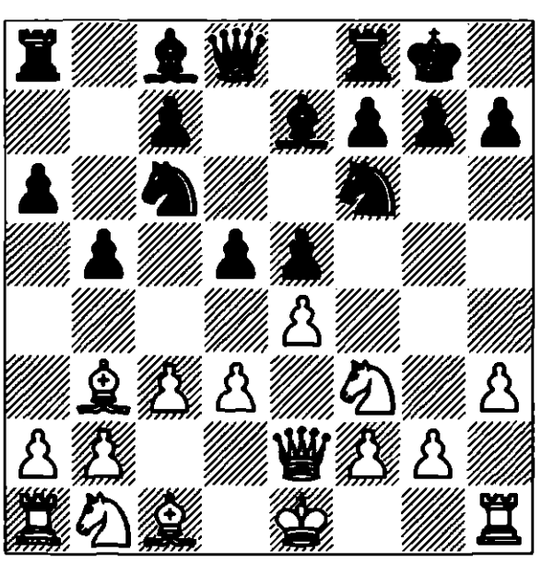
9 ♘bd2

White has also tried:

a) 9 ♗g5 dxe4 10 dxe4 ♘d7 11 ♗e3 ♘a5 12 ♗c2 ♘c4 13 ♗c1 ♗b7 14 ♘bd2 ♘xd2 15 ♗xd2 c5 16 0-0 ♕c7 17 b3 ♖fd8 with an equal position, Tiviakov-Adams, Groningen FIDE KO 1997.

b) 9 h3 *(D)* seems to have little independent significance:

B



b1) 9...♖e8 is very likely to transpose, via 10 ♘bd2, to the main line.

b2) 9...h6 10 ♘bd2 ♖e8 11 ♘f1 ♗e6 and now:

b21) 12 g4!?; e.g., 12...♘a5 13 ♗c2 dxe4 14 dxe4 ♗c4 15 ♕e3 and the game goes on.

b22) 12 ♘g3 ♗f8 13 0-0 ♘a5 14 ♗c2 dxe4 (unfortunately for White, the positionally desirable dxe4 doesn't work tactically) 15 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 16 ♕xe4 ♗d5 and Black was fine in Skripchenko-Qin Kanying, Shenyang wom 2000.

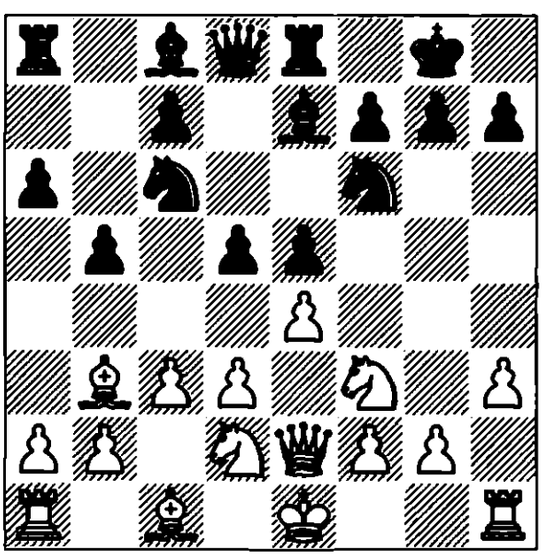
9...♖e8

9...♗b7 is playable but after 10 ♘f1 b4 11 ♘g3 bxc3 12 bxc3, Black should avoid 12...d4?! 13 ♗b2 a5 14 ♗a4 dxc3 15 ♗xc3 ± Tiviakov-Nurkić, Montecatini 1995. Black has too many pawn-islands.

10 h3 *(D)*

White continues to conceal his plans. 10 ♘f1 gives Black more information. He chose the slightly weakening 10...h6 in Dawson-N.Nikolić, Oakham 1986. Now 11 h3!?, planning g4 and only then ♘g3 would have been more critical than 11 ♘g3 ♗f8 12 0-0 ♘a5 13 ♗c2 c5 14 ♖d1 ♘c6 15 h3 ♗e6 16 b3?! ♕c7 17 ♗b2, which allowed Black to take the initiative by 17...d4! 18 c4 g6 19 ♗c1 ♗g7 20 ♘h2 ♔h7 21 ♖f1 ♘d7 22 a3 ♖ab8 23 ♖a2 a5 24 ♘f3 a4 ∓.

B



10...♗f8 11 g4!? ♗b7 12 ♘f1 ♘a5 13 ♗c2 c5 14 ♘g3 c4!

Securing counterplay and opening up the position, so that the white king doesn't feel absolutely comfortable any more in the centre.

15 0-0

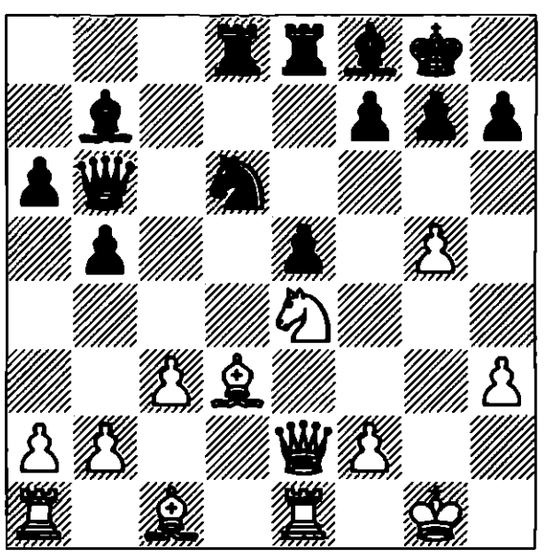
This is an admission that White's strategy has been a bit too optimistic and perhaps even unrealistic. Black is not worse.

Conclusion:
The plan of completing the ♘f1-hop with the king still in the centre, including the g-pawn in the attack as well, is an interesting one. It is well known from the Italian Game, where it can be rather poisonous. However, we believe the main line shows the drawbacks of the plan and what Black should strive to achieve.

Illustrative Game 24

Sumaneev – Notkin
Russian Cht (Oriol) 1997

15...cxd3 16 ♗xd3 ♘c4 17 ♖e1 ♘d6 18 ♘d2 ♕b6 19 g5 ♘fxe4 20 ♘dxe4 dxe4 21 ♘xe4 ♖ad8 *(D)*



Here the white pawn on g5 leaves an odd impression. Black is better at this stage, but after some exchanges his initiative quickly peters out.

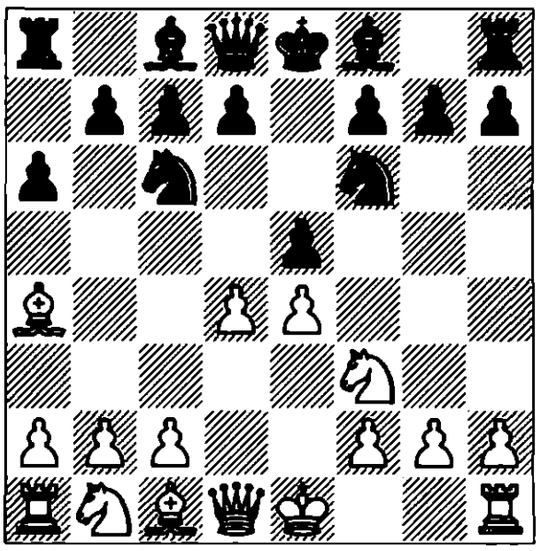
22 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 23 ♗e4 ♗xe4 24 ♕xe4 ♗c5 25 ♗e3 ♗xe3 26 ♖xe3 ♖d2 ½-½

7D: CARL: 5 d4

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6)

5 d4!? *(D)*

This is the Central Attack Ruy Lopez – or in short CARL. It's one of the trickier variations at White's disposal. It may appear slightly unthematic as White opens up the centre rather than trying to build up a big pawn-centre. One would expect this strategy to be more likely to succeed with the bishop on c4 rather than on a4 but actually the bishop's position has quite a few advantages – mainly discouraging Black from freeing his position with ...d5.



5...exd4

In order to equalize, Black has to follow one of a few rather narrow paths. However, if he knows (or finds) these, he should have few worries.

6 0-0

The line unique for the 5 d4 move-order starts 6 e5 ♘e4, when White can try:

a) 7 0-0 appears too slow after 7...♘c5! 8 ♗xc6 dxc6 9 ♘xd4 ♘e6 10 ♘f5 (10 ♗e3 ♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 ♗f5 is at least equal for Black) 10...♕xd1 11 ♖xd1 ♗d7 and compared to the Berlin queenless middlegame (which arises after *3...♘f6 4 0-0 ♘xe4 5 d4 ♘d6 6 ♗xc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 ♘f5 8 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8*), Black's 'problem knight' has already occupied the splendid blockading square e6, securing him excellent chances.

b) 7 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 8 ♕xd4 ♘c5 9 ♘c3 ♘xa4 10 ♕xa4 b6 11 0-0 ♗b7 12 ♖e1 ♕e7 13 ♕c4 ♕c5 14 ♕xc5 ♗xc5 15 ♗g5 h6 16 ♗h4 g5 ½-½ Malaniuk-Zilbershtein, Kiev 1989.

6...♗e7

This is a sensible move, preparing ...0-0. In addition it is a practical choice as the position can also arise from the move-order *5 0-0 ♗e7 6 d4 exd4*.

7 e5

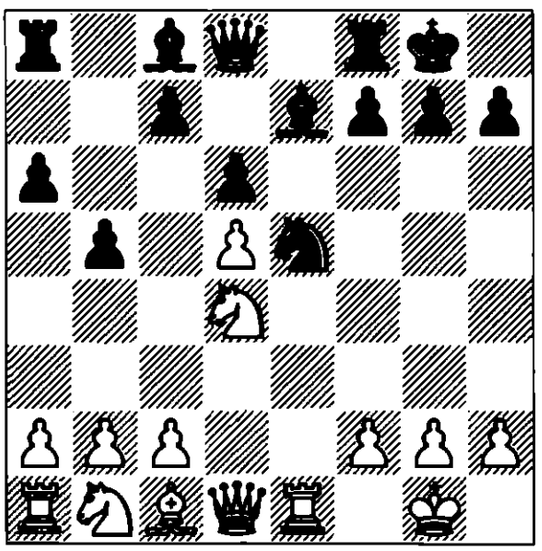
7 ♖e1 is an important alternative. 7...b5 and then:

a) 8 ♗b3 d6 seems very satisfactory for Black:

a1) Not 9 ♘xd4?, which leads to the famous Noah's Ark Trap after 9...♘xd4 10 ♕xd4 c5 followed by ...c4.

a2) 9 a4 ♗g4 10 axb5 axb5 11 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 12 ♘a3 ♕a5 13 ♕d2 ♗xf3 14 gxf3 0-0 ∓ Volokitin-Dorfman, Bad Wiessee 2001.

a3) 9 ♗d5 ♘xd5 10 exd5 ♘e5 11 ♘xd4 0-0 *(D)* is critical:



a31) 12 f4 ♗g4 13 ♕d2 ♘c4 14 ♕d3 ♖e8 gives Black a promising initiative.

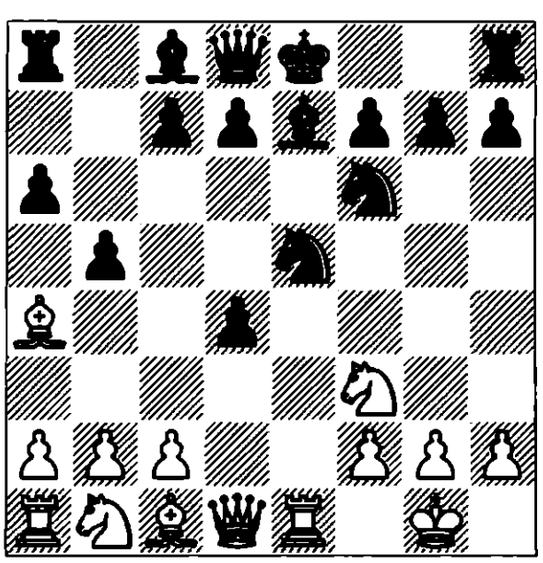
a32) 12 ♗f4 ♗b7 13 ♘e2 ♘c4 14 ♘bc3 ♗f6 15 ♖b1 ♖e8 16 ♕d3 ♗xc3 17 ♘xc3 ♕f6 18 ♗d2 ♕g6 19 ♕xg6 hxg6 20 ♗f4 b4 and Black won material with a clear advantage in Fressinet-Kramnik, Paris rpd 2002.

a33) 12 b3 ♗b7 13 f4 ♘d7 14 c4 ♗f6 15 ♘c3 ♘c5 16 ♕d2 bxc4 17 bxc4 ♕d7 18 ♗b2 ♖fe8 = Van der Wiel-Smejkal, Vienna 1980.

a34) 12 ♘c3 ♗g4 13 f3 ♗d7 14 b3 ♖e8 15 ♗b2 ♕b8 16 ♘e4 ♕b6 = Satyapragyan-Thipsay, Indian Ch (Mumbai) 2003.

a35) 12 a4 ♗g4 13 f3 ♗d7 14 ♘c3 b4 15 ♘ce2 ♗f6 16 b3 ♖e8 ∓ 17 ♗f4 ♕b8 18 ♕d2 ♕b7 19 c4 bxc3 20 ♘xc3 ♕b4 21 ♘e4? ♕xd4+! 0-1 P.Cramling-Balashov, Hastings 1985/6.

b) 8 e5 is trickier. After 8...♘xe5 *(D)* White has tried:



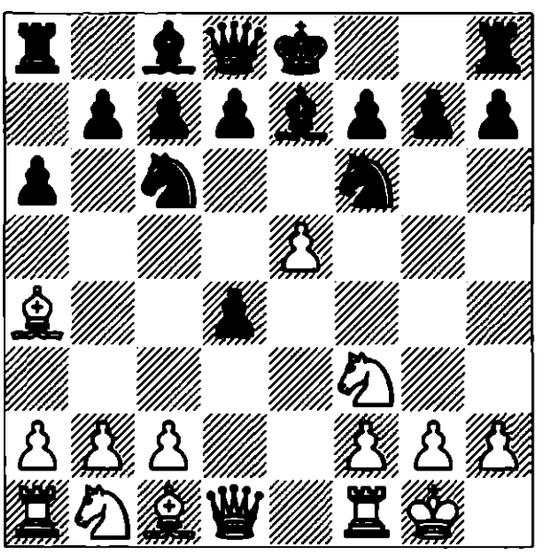
b1) 9 ♘xe5 bxa4 10 ♕xd4 0-0 11 ♘c3 ♖b8 12 a3!? ♖b6 13 ♗g5 h6 14 ♗h4 ♖e6 15 f4 (15 ♖ad1 ♖e8 16 ♘d3 ♗b7 17 ♖xe6 fxe6 18 ♘e5 ♘d5 19 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 = Reich-Shvidler, Lenk 1990) 15...♗b7 16 f5 ♖d6 17 ♕a7 ♗a8 18 ♖e2 ♘d5 19 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 = Makarychev-Timoshchenko, Tashkent 1987.

b2) 9 ♖xe5 d6 10 ♖e1 (10 ♖xe7+ ♕xe7 11 ♗b3 c5 is better for Black according to theory) 10...bxa4 11 ♘xd4 ♗d7 12 ♕f3 0-0 13 ♘c6 ♗xc6 14 ♕xc6 ♘d7 and now:

b21) 15 ♕xa4 ♗f6 16 ♘c3 ♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♖e8 ∓ Mathe-Wiedenkeller, Copenhagen 1986.

b22) 15 ♘c3 ♘b6 16 ♘xa4 ♘xa4 17 ♕xa4 ♗f6 18 c3 ♕b8 19 ♕c6 ♖e8 = Zapata-Anand, Manila OL 1992.

We now return to 7 e5 *(D)*:



7...♘e4 8 ♘xd4

8 ♖e1 ♘c5 9 ♗xc6 dxc6 10 ♘xd4 0-0 (10...♘e6 looks very solid as well) 11 ♘c3 ♖e8 doesn't present Black with any difficulties:

a) 12 ♗e3 ♗f8 13 f4 ♘e6 14 ♘b3 ♗b4 15 ♕f3 ♗xc3 16 bxc3 ♕d5 17 ♕g3 ♕e4 18 ♕f2 ♕f5 = Erdelyi-Vajda, Budapest 2001. Black has a nice blockade.

b) 12 ♗f4 ♘e6 13 ♘xe6 ♕xd1 14 ♖axd1 ♗xe6 15 a3 h6 16 h3 a5 and Black had a slight endgame advantage in Prentos-Skembris, Poros 1998. His bishop-pair is clearly more relevant than White's pawn-majority here, with the e5-pawn having advanced too far.

8...0-0 9 ♘f5

9 ♘xc6 dxc6 10 ♕e2 ♘c5 11 ♘c3 ♘xa4 12 ♘xa4 ♕d4 13 ♘c3 ♗g4 14 ♕e3 ♖fd8 = Bazant-Socko, Pardubice 2001.

9...d5 10 ♗xc6

This leaves Black with doubled pawns, but at the moment they are not much of a liability; they are mobile and control central squares.

a) 10 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 11 c3 ♘c5 12 ♗c2 ♗f5 and now:

a1) 13 ♗e3 ♘e6 14 ♗b3 c5 15 g4 ♗xb1 16 ♖xb1 d4 ∓ Kuijf-Balashov, 2nd Bundesliga 1992/3.

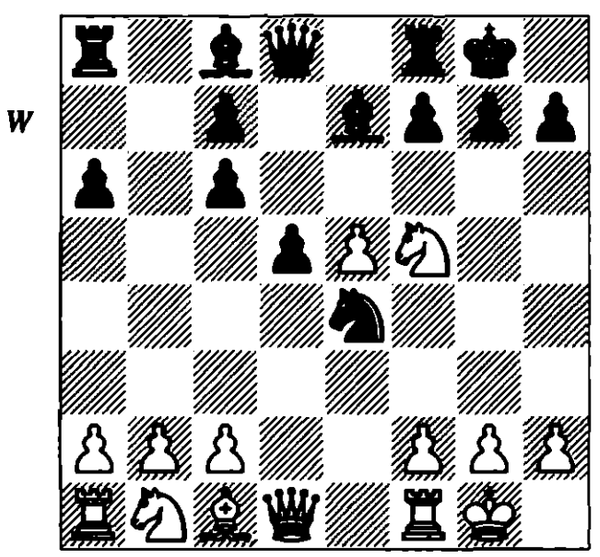
a2) 13 ♗xf5 ♘xf5 14 ♕c2 g6 15 g4 ♘g7 16 ♗e3 ♘ce6 17 f4 f5 = Kuijf-Van der Sterren, Dutch Ch 1992.

b) 10 exd6 ♗xf5 11 dxe7 ♘xe7 12 ♗b3 ♕xd1 (12...♘c5 13 ♘c3 ♘xb3 14 cxb3 ♕xd1 15 ♖xd1 ♖ad8 16 ♗f4 ½-½ Kramnik-Adams, Cap d'Agde rpd 2003) 13 ♖xd1 ♖ad8 14 ♖e1 ♘c5 and then:

b1) 15 ♘c3 ♖d7 16 ♗e3 ♘xb3 17 cxb3 ♖fd8 18 ♖ad1 f6 19 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 20 ♖d1 ♖xd1+ 21 ♘xd1 ♘d5 ∓ Ljubojević-Karpov, Milan 1975.

b2) 15 ♗c4 ♘c6 16 ♗g5 ♖d7 17 ♘a3 b5 = Akopian-Ivanchuk, Adelaide jr Wch 1988.

10...bxc6 *(D)*



11 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 12 ♖e1 ♖e8 13 f3

13 ♘d2? ♕xe5 14 ♘xe4 dxe4 15 f4 ♕f6 16 ♖b1 ♗f5 17 ♗e3 ♖ed8 ∓ Mnatsakanian-Abramović, Erevan 1982.

13...♘d6

13...♘c5, heading for e6, has also given Black excellent results; e.g., 14 b3 ♘e6 15 ♕d2 ♕c5+ 16 ♕f2 ♕d4 17 ♕xd4 ♘xd4 18 ♘a3 ♗f5 19 ♗e3 ♘e6 20 ♖ad1 h5 21 ♖d2 a5 22 ♘b1 ♖ad8 ∓ Gashimov-Ivanchuk, Antalya Ech 2004.

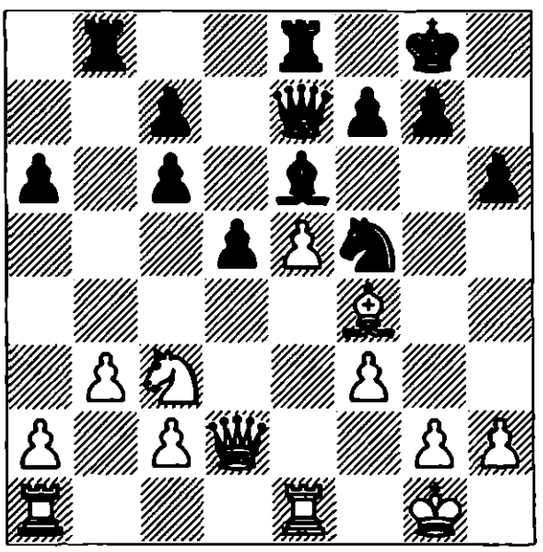
14 ♗f4

14 b3 ♘f5 15 ♕d2 ♕e6 16 ♕f2 ♗b7 17 ♘c3 d4 18 ♘a4 ♕e7 19 ♗b2 ♖ad8 = Marjanović-Psakhis, Dortmund 1982.

14...♘f5 15 ♕d2 ♖b8 16 b3 h6

16...♖b4 17 c3 ♖b6 18 ♕f2 c5 19 ♘d2 ♗b7 20 ♘f1 d4 21 ♘g3 ♘h4 22 ♘e4 ♗xe4 23 ♖xe4 ♘g6 = Adams-Hebden, London 1989.

17 ♘c3 ♗e6 *(D)*



18 ♕f2

Alternatively White can try:

a) 18 ♘e2 c5 and it is not clear what the knight is doing on e2.

b) 18 ♘a4 c5 19 ♕f2 may be the most critical continuation for White. Obviously the c5-square is crucial:

b1) 19...g5?! 20 ♗c1 c4 21 ♗b2 ♖b5 22 ♖ad1 c6 23 g4 ♘h4 24 ♗d4 ± Veenstra-J.Jimenez, corr. 2001.

b2) 19...c4!? 20 ♘c5 (20 bxc4 ♖b4!) 20...♖b5 21 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 22 bxc4 (22 g4 ♘e7 is just a weakening of White's position) 22...dxc4 and Black has enough counterplay.

18...♕b4 19 ♗d2 ♕d4

Chances are balanced.

Conclusion:

This line has a strong drawing tendency and shouldn't challenge Black in a theoretical sense.

Illustrative Game 25

Hjartarson – Spassky

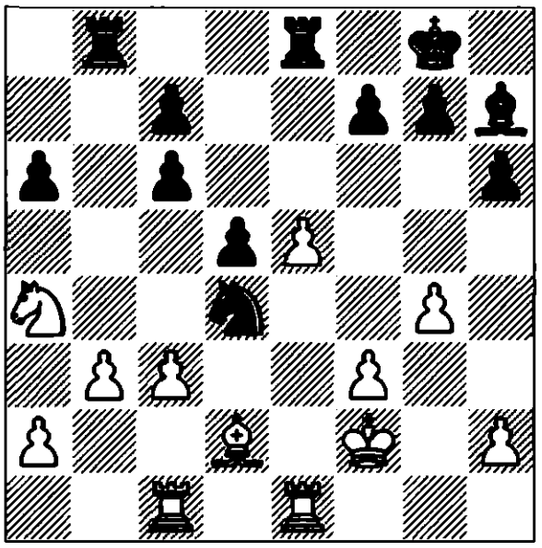
Bayern-Lyon ECC 1991

20 ♘a4 ♕xf2+ 21 ♔xf2 ♘d4 22 ♖ac1 ♗f5 23 g4 ♗h7 24 c3 *(D)*

24...♘c2

The knight wouldn't sit so well on e6 now, as White is ready for f4 and f5.

B



25 ♖e2 d4 26 cxd4 ♘xd4 27 ♖ee1 ♘c2 28 ♖ed1!?

White prefers to play on a pawn down rather than allowing Black a repetition after 28 ♖e2 ♘d4.

28...♖xe5 29 f4 ♖ee8 30 ♘c5 ♘b4 31 ♗xb4 ♖xb4 32 ♖c4 ♖xc4 33 bxc4

It seems that White has compensation for his pawn but no more than that.

33...h5 34 h3 hxg4 35 hxg4 f5!

Black manages to activate his bishop just in time.

36 ♖d7

If 36 g5, the bishop will be brought into battle with 36...♗g6 and then either ...♗f7 or ...♗h5 depending on circumstances.

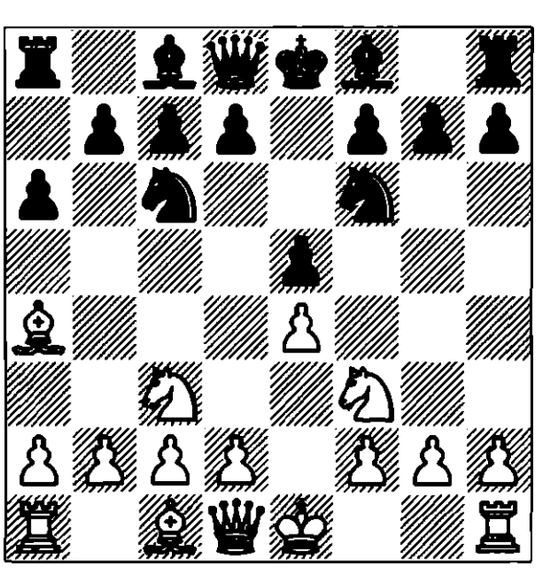
36...fxg4 37 ♖xc7 ♗f5 38 ♖xc6 ♖d8 39 ♖xa6 ♖d2+ 40 ♔g3 ♖c2 41 ♖a3 ♖xc4 42 ♘d3 ½-½

7E: Spassky's 5 ♘c3

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6)

5 ♘c3 *(D)*

B



This is normally named after the 10th World Champion, who employed it quite regularly (admittedly a lot of his games with the line were drawn before move 20). Most of the strategic ideas, most notably the ♘d5 themes, were introduced by Tarrasch and Alekhine (but they both have plenty of other lines named after themselves).

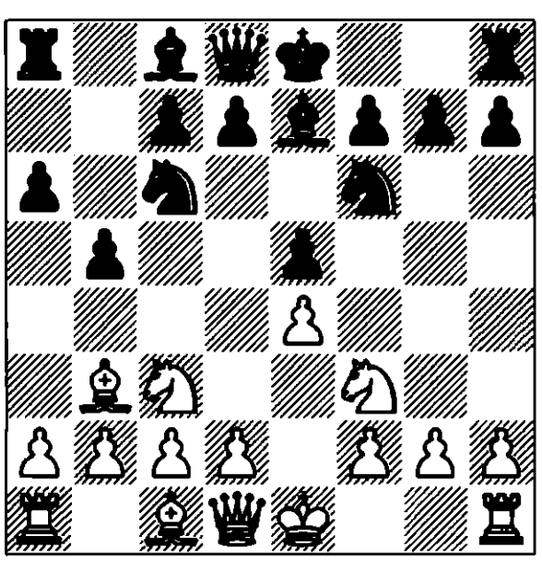
The line is occasionally also called the Four Knights Variation of the Ruy Lopez. It is hard to argue with that name, as it describes quite well what is going on. Our only objection is that the line should not be confused with the position arising after 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗b5, as in that line White will normally meet 4...a6 by 5 ♗xc6 dxc6 6 ♘xe5 with promising play.

5...b5

As usual, Black must concern himself with the safety of his e-pawn as soon as White protects his own (but 5...♗e7, with the tactical point 6 ♗xc6?! dxc6 7 ♘xe5 ♘xe4! 8 ♘xe4 ♕d4, is also fully playable if you find the b-pawn move too weakening).

6 ♗b3 ♗e7 *(D)*

W



7 d3

White can also try:

a) 7 a4 b4 8 ♘d5 0-0 9 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 10 c3 ♖b8 11 0-0 d6 12 a5 ♘e7 13 d3 bxc3 14 bxc3 c5 with equality, Yurtaev-Peng Xiaomin, Istanbul OL 2000.

b) After 7 0-0, we have reached the position that could also have arisen after *5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♘c3 b5 7 ♗b3*. It is quite likely to transpose to lines we examine after *7 d3*. Play can continue 7...d6 8 ♘d5 ♘a5 9 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 10 d4 ♘xb3 11 axb3 ♗b7 (11...h6 looks very natural too and

has been played by Trifunović among others), when White has tried:

b1) 12 ♖e1 ♘xe4 13 ♕d3 f5 14 c4 ½-½ Keres-Unzicker, Bamberg 1968.

b2) 12 ♗g5 h6 13 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 14 ♖e1 0-0 15 dxe5 dxe5 was equal in Keres-Grünfeld, Poznan training 1943 and D.Gross-Petran, Balatonbereny 1995.

7...d6 8 ♘d5 *(D)*

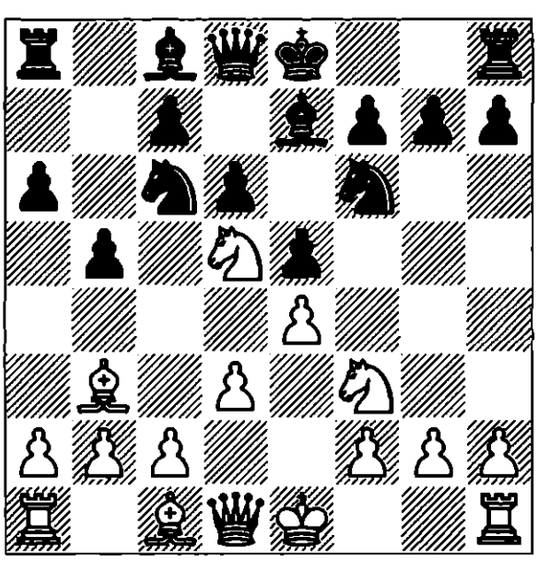
This tends to lead to an exchange of Black's dark-squared bishop for White's light-squared one.

a) 8 0-0 allows 8...♘a5, when Black is at least equal.

b) 8 h3?! should also be met by 8...♘a5; e.g., 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 ♕d2 ♗b7 11 0-0 ♘xb3 12 axb3 ♖e8 13 ♘g5? (completely pointless, but Black was already better with the bishop-pair) 13...h6 14 ♘f3 ♗f8 15 ♘h2 d5! ∓ Kessler-Renner, Augsburg 1994.

c) 8 a4 b4 9 ♘d5 0-0 10 0-0 ♖b8 11 ♗a2 ♘a5 12 d4 ♘xd5 13 ♗xd5 c6 14 ♗a2 exd4 15 ♘xd4 ♗f6 = Morozevich-Kaidanov, Beersheba 2005.

B



8...♘a5! 9 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 10 0-0

The immediate 10 ♗g5 ♘xb3 11 axb3 h6 leads to similar play:

a) 12 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 13 ♘d2 0-0 14 h3 ♕e7 15 g4 ♗b7 16 h4 f5! 17 gxf5 ♖xf5 18 exf5 ♗xh1 19 ♕g4 ♗c6 ∓ Suer-Frey Beckman, Skopje OL 1972.

b) 12 ♗h4 0-0 13 0-0 ♕e6 14 ♕d2 ♗b7 15 ♗g3 g5!? (the immediate 15...♘h5 is more conventional; maybe Black didn't like 16 ♘h4, but then 16...d5 looks good) 16 h4 g4 17 ♘h2 ♘h5 18 ♖ae1 ♕g6 with a slight advantage for Black, Groszpeter-Ruck, Hungarian Cht 2004/5 (18...f5!?).

10...0-0 11 ♗g5

Alternatively White can try:

a) 11 ♕e2 ♘xb3 12 axb3 c5 13 ♗d2 ♘d7 14 b4 ½-½ Short-Peng Xiaomin, Beijing 2000.

b) 11 ♗d2 ♘xb3 12 axb3 ♘d7 13 ♖e1 ♗b7 14 d4 f5! 15 exf5 (15 dxe5 fxe4 16 ♘g5 ♕xe5 ∓ B.Lengyel-Lukacs, Budapest 1993) 15...♖xf5 16 dxe5 ♖xf3 17 gxf3 ♘xe5 ∓ Spassky-Yusupov, Linares 1990.

11...h6 12 ♗h4 ♗b7

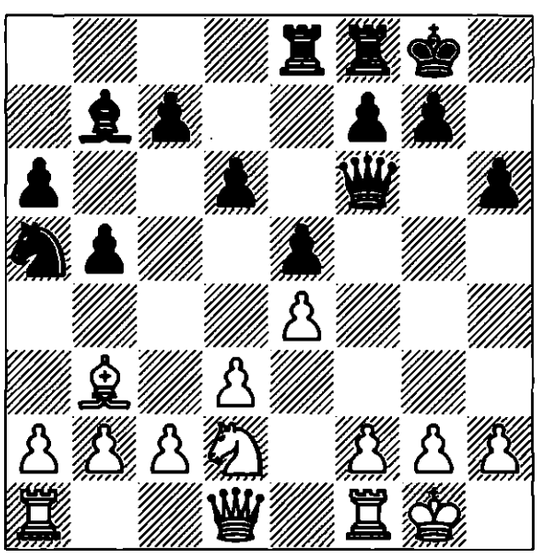
The more ambitious 12...g5 didn't quite work out as Black had hoped after 13 ♗g3 ♗g4 14 h3 ♗h5 15 ♕e2 ♔g7 16 ♕e3 ♘d7 17 ♘d2 ♘b6 18 c3 ♘xb3 19 axb3 a5 20 d4, when the kingside pawn advance turned out to be a weakness after all, in Benjamin-Kaidanov, USA Ch (Chandler) 1997.

13 ♘d2 ♖ae8 14 ♗xf6

Or 14 ♕f3 g5 15 ♗g3 ♘d7 =.

14...♕xf6 *(D)*

W



15 ♗d5 ♗xd5 16 exd5 c5 17 c3 ♕g6 18 ♕b1 f5

If it weren't for his misplaced knight, Black could claim an advantage here. As it is, chances are roughly balanced.

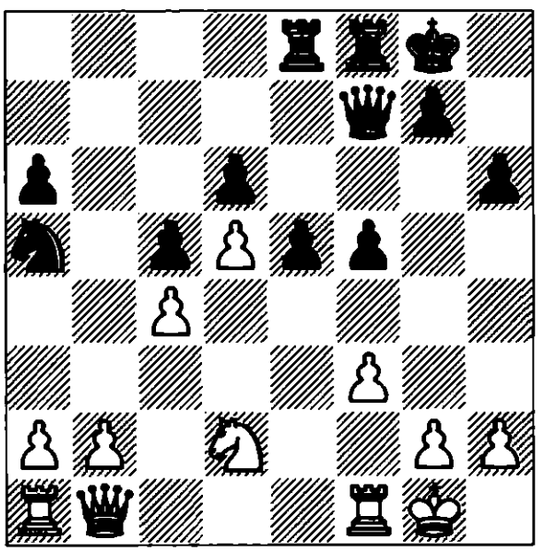
Conclusion:

5 ♘c3 is an excellent choice for an ex-world champion longing for the tennis court outside. It is, however, a close relative of the Four Knights Opening and for most other players it is a bit toothless. Seen from Black's perspective it can be extremely hard to keep any winning chances alive.

Illustrative Game 26

Spassky – Short
Linares 1990

19 f3 ♕f7 20 c4 bxc4 21 dxc4 *(D)*



21...♘b7

This marks the start of an impressive journey for this knight; it aims for... g6!

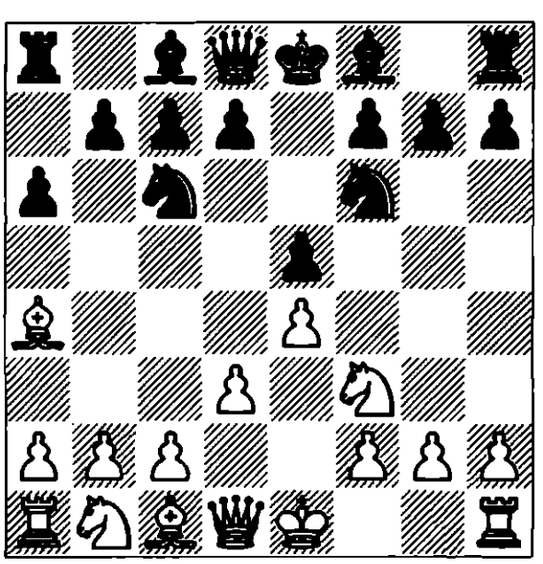
22 ♕c2 ♕d7 23 ♖ae1 ♘d8 24 ♕c3 ♘f7 25 a3 ♖b8 26 ♖b1 ♘h8 27 b4 cxb4 28 axb4 ♘g6 ½-½

The c5 break is hard to engineer for White, as it will leave the d5-pawn too weak.

7F: Anderssen's 5 d3

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6)

5 d3 *(D)*



This is sometimes called the Anderssen Variation after the top 19th-century German player. White immediately threatens ♗xc6 and ♘xe5. While White's main plan is still natural (if somewhat slow) development with 0-0 and ♘bd2 and central expansion with c3 and a belated d4, there are also a couple of more aggressive plans available – mainly based on delaying castling, hoping for a surprising kingside attack.

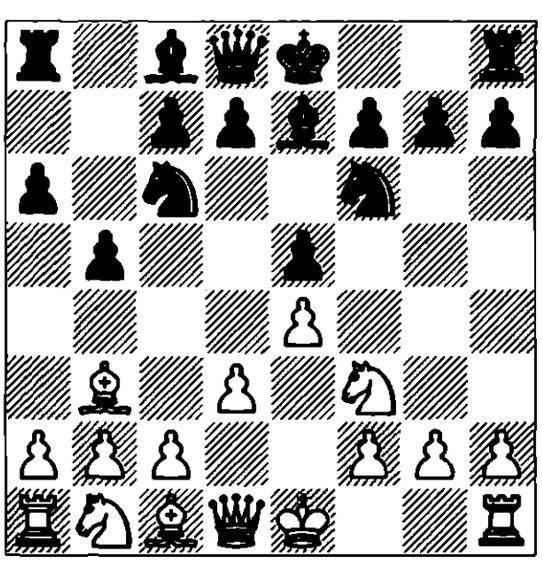
Generally you will find a lot of transpositional possibilities to the Pilnik Variation (6E) and also to the nameless variation in 6G in case White plays an early a4.

5...b5

If Black delays this, White will have time for c3, allowing him to meet ...b5 with ♗c2 if he so desires.

6 ♗b3 ♗e7 *(D)*

Against the timid system chosen by White, it might seem tempting to try to save a few tempi by immediately developing the bishop to g7. The consequences of 6...g6 7 ♘g5!? d5 8 exd5 ♘d4 are not entirely clear. However, for practical reasons we seek to transpose to positions that could arise after *5 0-0 ♗e7 6 d3.*



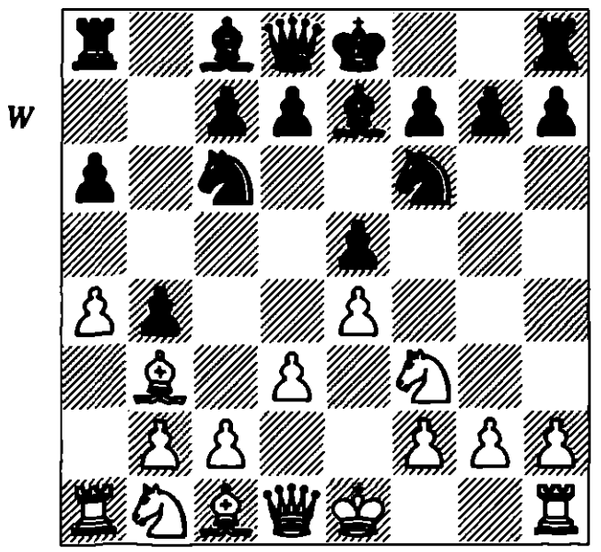
7 0-0

We give this as the main line, as the position may also arise from *5 0-0 ♗e7 6 d3 b5 7 ♗b3.* White can also delay castling, considering the option of starting a kingside attack with ♘d2-f1-g3 in some combination with h3 and g4.

a) 7 c3 0-0 8 0-0 (8 ♘bd2 – *7 ♘bd2 0-0 8 c3*) 8...d6 – *7 0-0 d6 8 c3 0-0.*

b) 7 a4 is not particularly common but quite logical when Black has not yet played ...d6 and is therefore unable to reply with ...♗d7 or ...♗g4. However, for us that is no great problem as 7...b4 *(D)* is the only move consistent with

our recommendation in Chapters 6F and 6G. Mostly this will transpose to our main line (*7 0-0 d6 8 a4 b4*) but White has two peculiar moves worth noting:



b1) 8 g4!? is an idea that has kept cropping up in all kind of openings the last few years. After 8...h6 (obviously 8...♘xg4?! 9 ♖g1 is exactly what White was hoping for, but 8...d6!? with the idea 9 g5 ♘d7 is definitely an option) 9 a5 d5!? (not obligatory, but it works rather well in the game) 10 ♗a4 ♗d7 11 ♘bd2, we think Black should try 11...dxe4 12 dxe4 ♗c5 13 h3 ♕e7 rather than 11...0-0 12 ♖g1, which gave White nice attacking chances in G.Kuzmin-Bezman, Ukrainian Cht (Alushta) 1999.

b2) 8 ♗d5!? ♘xd5 9 exd5 ♘d4 10 ♘xe5 should be met by 10...b3! 11 cxb3 ♖b8 12 ♘d2 ♗b7, when practice has confirmed that Black has full compensation for the two-pawn deficit. It must be said, however, that such a strong player as Aronian preferred the simple 10...0-0 in Saltaev-Aronian, Dutch Cht 2005 and drew.

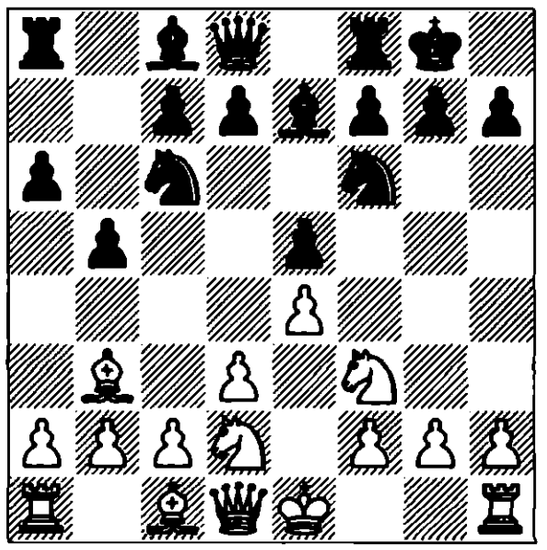
c) 7 ♘bd2 0-0 *(D)* has independent value only if White delays castling for some time:

c1) 8 0-0 d6 9 c3 – *7 0-0 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 ♘bd2.*

c2) After 8 ♘f1 d5 Black is active:

c21) 9 ♘g3 ♘a5 10 ♘xe5 ♗d6 11 ♘f3 ♘xb3 12 axb3 ♗xg3 13 hxg3 dxe4 14 dxe4 ♕xd1+ 15 ♔xd1 ♘xe4 ∓ V.Ivanov-Svidler, St Petersburg 1999.

c22) 9 ♕e2 dxe4 10 dxe4 a5! (10...♘a5 is also possible, removing the dangerous Spanish bishop, but the text-move is more energetic) 11 ♕xb5 ♕d6 (11...♘d4!?) 12 ♕e2 ♗a6 13 ♗c4 ♕b4+ 14 ♘1d2 ♗xc4 15 ♕xc4 ♕xc4 16 ♘xc4

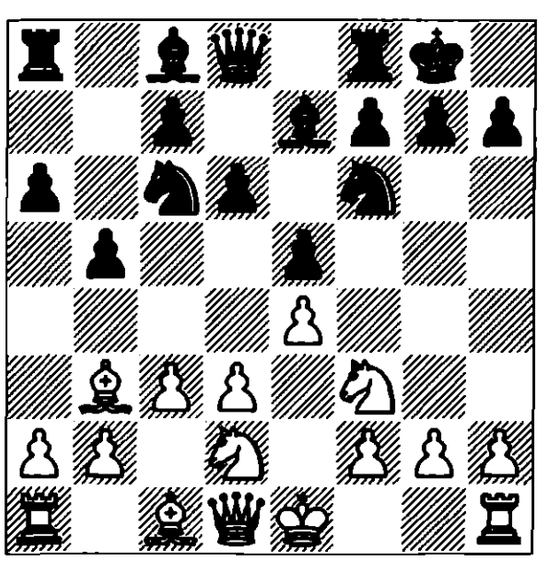


♘xe4 17 ♘fxe5 ♘d4 = Stoma-Fedorchuk, Swidnica 2000.

c3) 8 c3 seems to be the move that keeps most options open:

c31) 8...d5 is under a cloud on account of the following game: 9 0-0 ♗b7 10 ♖e1 dxe4 (10...♖e8 11 exd5 ♘xd5 12 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 13 ♖xe5 doesn't give Black enough compensation) 11 dxe4 ♗c5 12 h3 ♘h5 13 ♗d5 ♕f6 14 a4 ♘f4 15 ♘b3 ♗b6 16 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 17 ♕e2 bxa4 18 ♖xa4 ♖fd8 19 ♖c4 ♖d6 20 ♘c5 ± Morozevich-Bacrot, Biel 2004.

c32) After 8...d6 *(D)*, White must again decide whether he should castle:

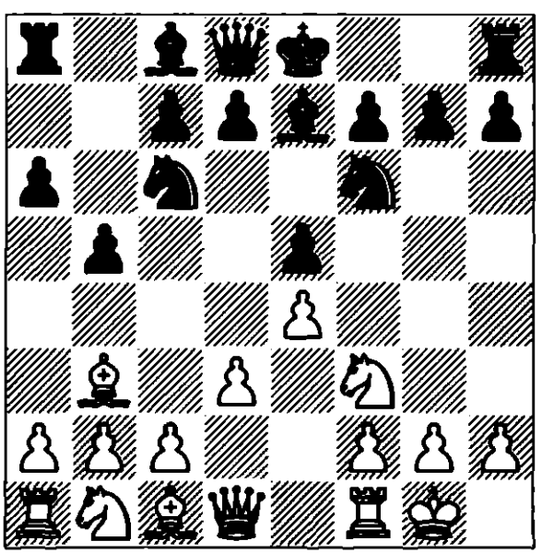


c321) 9 0-0 ♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 ♖e1 transposes to a main line of the Pilnik Variation (*5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 d3 ♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 ♘bd2*) – see Line 6E.

c322) After 9 ♘f1 ♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 ♘g3 ♘c6 12 0-0, it's obviously very tempting for Black to claim a central advantage by 12...d5!?. J.Johansson-Barkhagen, Växjö 1992 continued

13 ♕e2 d4 14 cxd4 cxd4 15 ♘h4 g6 16 f4 and now Black decided to initiate complications not unfavourable for him with the sequence 16...♘g4!? 17 ♘f3 ♘e3 18 ♗xe3 dxe3. Black has full compensation (for the pawn he is bound to lose) on account of the chronic weakening of the dark-square complex in White's camp. A more sedate continuation would have been 16...exf4 17 ♗xf4 ♗e6 followed by ...♘d7 seeking eventually to win control over the crucial e5-square.

We now return to 7 0-0 *(D)*:



7...d6

It can be argued that 7...0-0, keeping open the option of playing ...d5 in one move, is more flexible. However, the fight for flexibility isn't just about keeping your own options open; it is just as much about limiting your opponent's possibilities. With ...d6 Black covers e5, and therefore threatens ...♘a5, thus limiting White's options.

8 a4

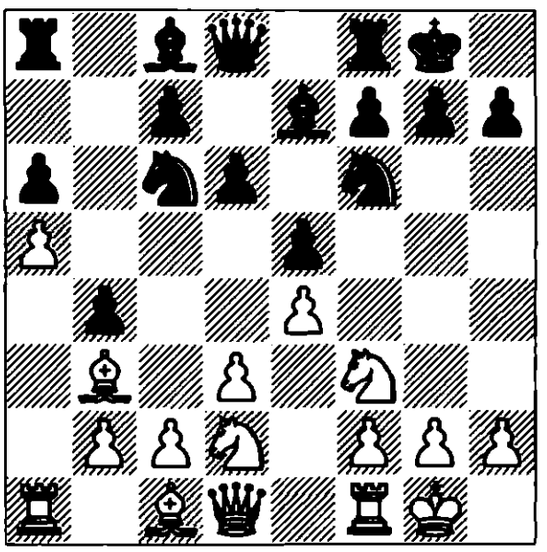
This is an attempt to improve over the lines in 6G by keeping the rook on f1, thereby saving a tempo. Alternatively White can try:

a) 8 c3 0-0 9 ♘bd2 ♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 a4 (11 ♖e1 again transposes to the Pilnik Variation) 11...♗e6 and in Goldenberg-Ganguly, Erevan jr Wch 2000, White found nothing more useful than 12 ♖e1 ♕c7 =.

b) 8 a3 0-0 9 ♘c3 ♗g4 10 ♗e3 ♘a5 11 ♗a2 c5 12 h3 ♗e6 13 ♗g5 ♘c6 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♘d5 g6 16 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 17 c3 ♖ad8 18 a4 b4 = Gazis-Mastrovasilis, Greek Cht (Kallithea) 2002.

8...b4 9 a5 0-0 10 ♘bd2 *(D)*

10 ♖e1 would lead right back to the position we have already considered in Line 6G after 5 *0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 a4 b4 9 a5 0-0 10 d3*. There are several later possibilities to transpose to that line if ...♗e6 and ♖e1 are played.



10...♖b8

10...♗e6 11 ♘c4 (11 ♗c4 ♕c8 12 ♖e1 – 6G) 11...♖b8 12 ♖e1 ♕c8 transposes to note 'b' to White's 12th move in Line 6G.

11 ♗c4

11 ♘c4 ♗e6 12 ♖e1 ♕c8 – note 'b' to White's 12th move in 6G.

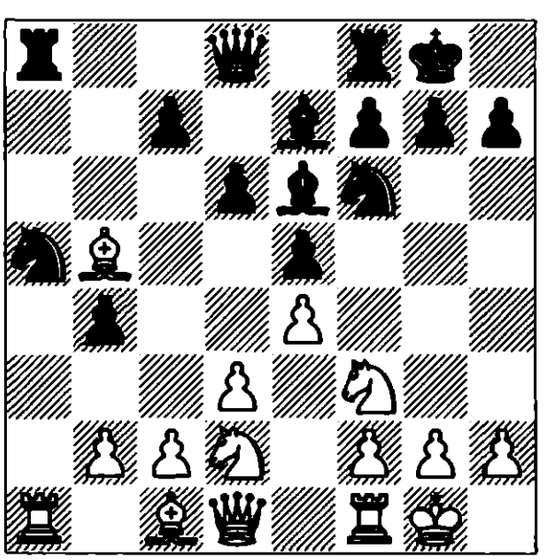
11...♗e6!? 12 ♗xa6

12 ♖e1 ♕c8 – 6G.

12...♖a8 13 ♗b5

13 ♗c4 ♖xa5 14 ♖xa5 ♘xa5 15 ♗xe6 fxe6 16 c3 bxc3 17 bxc3 ♕d7 = Lukin-Raisky, Miedzybrodzie 1991.

13...♘xa5 *(D)*



Black is fine here, with a healthy pawn-structure and harmonious piece deployment.

Conclusion:
Compared to the similar lines in 6G, White seems to have a slightly improved version, as he can try to replace ♖e1 with a more useful move. Still, Black shouldn't worry about his prospects.

Illustrative Game 27

Dvoirys – G. Kuzmin
USSR Ch (Leningrad) 1990

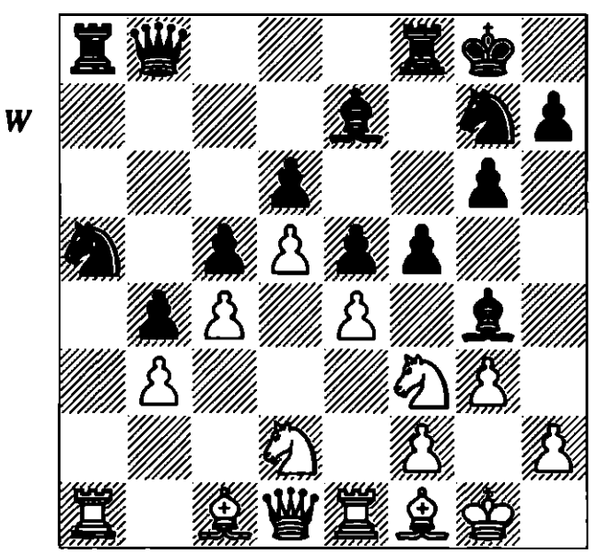
14 d4 ♕b8 15 ♗d3 c5 16 d5 ♗d7 17 c4 g6 18 b3

Black's handling of the rest of the game is instructive:

18...♘h5 19 g3 ♘g7 20 ♖e1

So this is where the rook belongs after all!

20...♗g4 21 ♗f1 f5 *(D)*



Black has firmly seized the initiative on the kingside and White lacks his usual counterplay on the other flank.

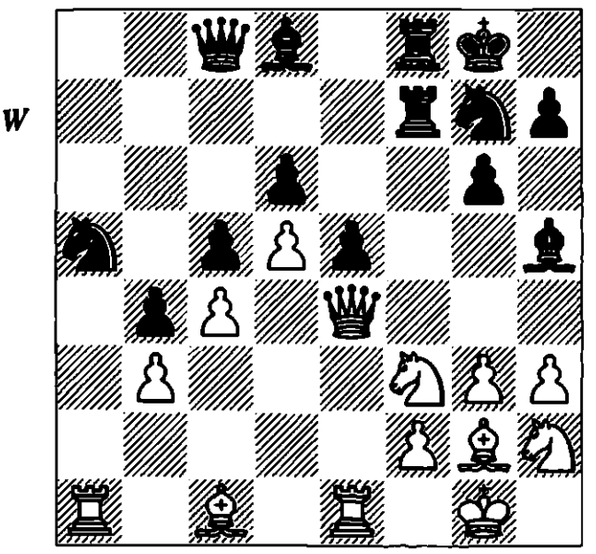
22 h3 ♗h5 23 ♗g2 ♖a7 24 ♘f1 ♗d8

The black pieces work together in excellent fashion: the bishop takes over the job of defending the a5-knight and simultaneously frees the 7th rank for the rook which can now swing over to the kingside to join the attack.

25 ♘1h2 ♕c8 26 ♕d3 fxe4 27 ♕xe4 ♖af7 *(D)*

28 ♖b1

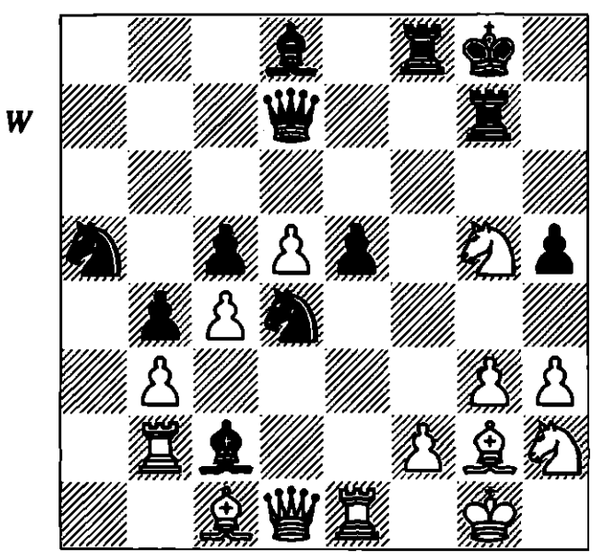
After 28 g4 ♘xb3 29 ♖b1 ♘xc1 30 ♖bxc1 ♔h8!? 31 gxh5 ♘xh5, the knight will land on f4 with excellent compensation for Black.



28...g5 29 ♖b2 ♗g6 30 ♕e2 h6 31 ♘g4 ♘f5 32 ♕d1 ♖g7 33 ♘d2 h5 34 ♘h2 ♘d4 35 ♘e4 ♕d7 36 ♘xg5?!

This seems to be the result of a miscalculation, but White's position hardly inspired confidence anyway; e.g., 36 ♗xg5? ♗xe4! winning on the spot.

36...♗c2! *(D)*



37 ♕xh5?

37 ♖xc2 ♘xc2 38 ♕xc2 ♗xg5, with a pawn for the exchange, would have been the lesser evil.

37...♕f5 38 f4

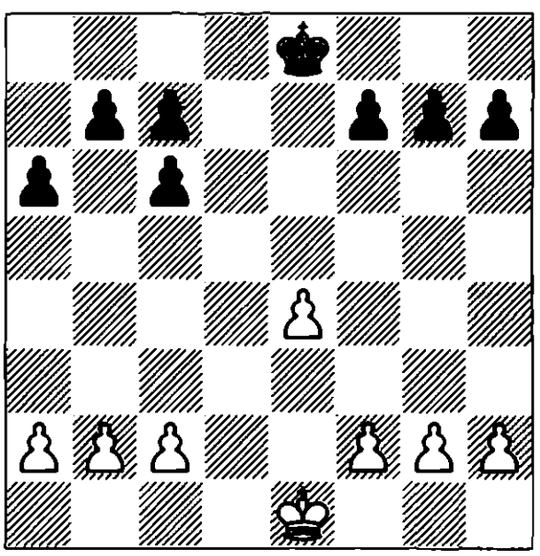
After 38 ♘hf3 ♗xg5 39 ♗xg5, 39...♖h7! 40 ♕g4 ♕xg4 41 hxg4 ♖xf3!, winning the house, is Black's most precise.

38...♖xg5! 0-1

39 fxg5 ♕f2+ 40 ♔h1 ♕xe1+ decides matters.

Part 4: Exchange Variations

Here we shall discuss three different versions of the Exchange Ruy Lopez. Although they are different in many ways, they have common strategic motifs. White gives up his bishop-pair in order to damage Black's queenside pawn-structure while acquiring a healthy pawn-majority on the kingside. On a very general level, theory's verdict is that the resulting positions are roughly level, but that will not help you much if White understands them better than you.



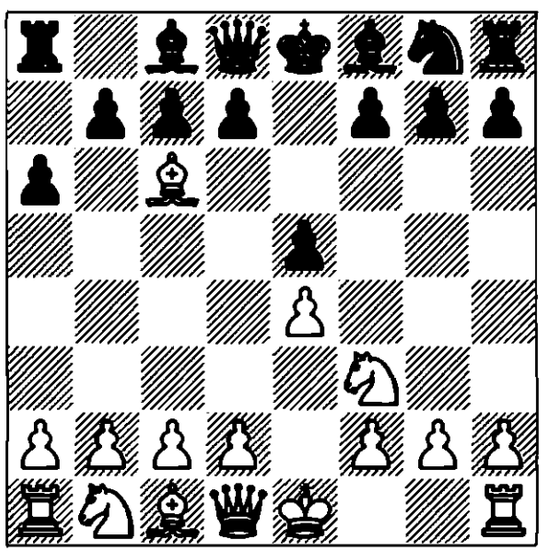
No introduction to the Exchange Variation can be complete without this diagram and some words about how Euwe analysed this position to a win for White, and later refinements on his lines. Well, actually you will not get the details here. Not only should it be obvious to anybody that Black should avoid the pure pawn endgame, but it should not be too difficult either.

Perhaps the student would get a more realistic picture of the affairs if a white knight and a black light-squared bishop were added, because that's the imbalance introduced by White's exchange on c6. However, somewhat surprisingly some ChessBase searches hinted that this extra material didn't improve Black's chances too much. For this conclusion to be valid, it is important that White has managed to organize his queenside pawns on dark squares, *i.e. on squares where the opponent's bishop cannot attack them.* If Black has succeeded in fixing White's queenside pawns on the same colour as his bishop, he might well be better as he can start the harvest at his leisure. However, the general rule in the positions we shall examine in the next few chapters is that *Black should avoid piece exchanges, as White's structural superiority increases in importance as pieces are exchanged.*

Introduction and Overview

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6)
4 ♗xc6 *(D)*

B



This exchange can sometimes be seen as an attempt to draw against a stronger opponent, but more frequently it's a low-risk winning attempt.

In a certain sense this is a 'White Speciality' – early on White ensures that the fight will be fought on his home ground. However, in contrast to most lines in this category, White is not mainly relying on tricks and surprise; rather he hopes to have a better understanding of the resulting pawn-structure and the frequently-occurring semi-endgames.

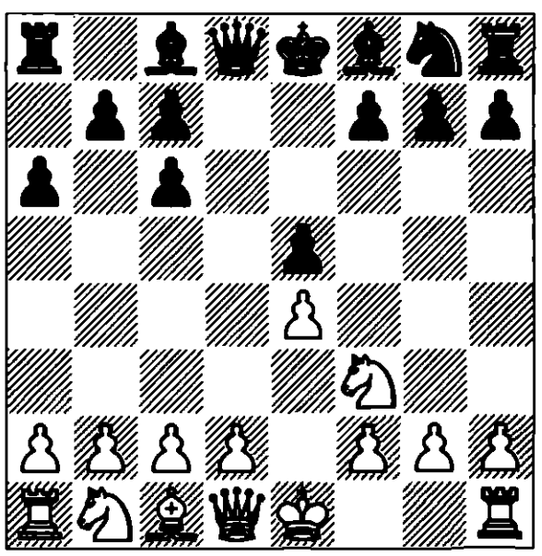
Delaying the capture by playing 4 ♗a4 and later taking on c6 (Chapter 9) loses a tempo.

That may not be much of a problem for White, as his basis for delaying the exchange is that Black's extra move has only been used to misplace his pieces for the exchange structure. The delay also allows Black to avoid the exchange with 4...b5 (not fitting well with our suggested repertoire) or 5...b5!? (which is probably a fully playable move-order).

4...dxc6 *(D)*

Black might like to capture towards the centre, but experience has shown that his development will then be too cumbersome. The position after 4...bxc6 5 0-0 d6 is identical to one resulting from the Steinitz Defence Deferred after *3...a6 4 ♗a4 d6 5 ♗xc6+ bxc6 6 0-0* with the single difference that White is to move.

W



5 0-0

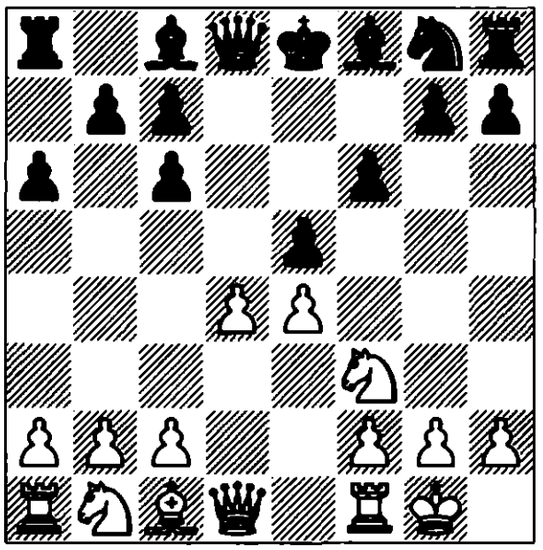
This natural move is generally attributed to Barendregt, and was later more widely popularized by Fischer. We shall refer to it as the Fischer Variation. Now ♘xe5 is more of a threat (although most of Black's natural replies will directly or indirectly defend against it). White's minor alternatives are discussed in Lines 8E and 8F.

5...f6

This rather ugly-looking move is the main line and our principal recommendation. As an alternative we offer 5...♘e7!? in Line 8D. The original reason it took so long for 5 0-0 to become popular, however, was the line 5...♗g4!? 6 h3 h5!. That line is still fluctuating wildly in popularity. For the moment it seems that Black is doing fairly well, but it takes quite some attention to follow the latest developments.

6 d4 *(D)*

B



A few alternatives are examined in Line 8C, but opening the centre is the consistent course after White gained an advantage in development with his 5th move.

6...exd4

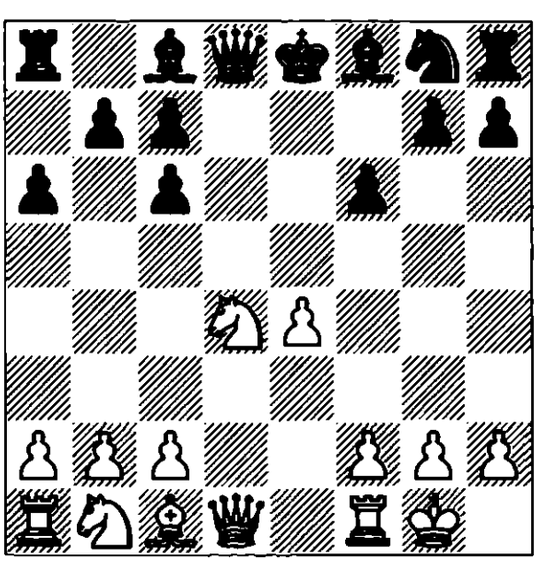
6...♗g4 is a popular alternative and according to present theory sufficient for equality too. One of the main lines goes 7 dxe5 ♕xd1 8 ♖xd1 fxe5 9 ♖d3 ♗d6 10 ♘bd2 b5 11 b3 ♘e7 12 ♗b2 ♘g6 13 g3 0-0 14 ♔g2 ♖f6 with mutual chances.

7 ♘xd4 *(D)*

After this move it's already obvious how the board has been split in two. On the kingside White has a healthy pawn-majority; Black's majority on the queenside, in contrast, is unable to make much progress without the help of his pieces.

7 ♕xd4, which is a more direct attempt to exchange queens, is examined in Line 8C.

B



7...c5

This is overwhelmingly the most popular move. We said earlier that all exchanges favour

White as it brings the game closer to a won pawn ending. However, here two concrete elements are more important and induce Black's reaction: firstly, he has weakened his kingside with the move ...f6, a factor that could prove lethal in a middlegame with queens on the board. Secondly, the exchange of queens allows him to complete his development smoothly.

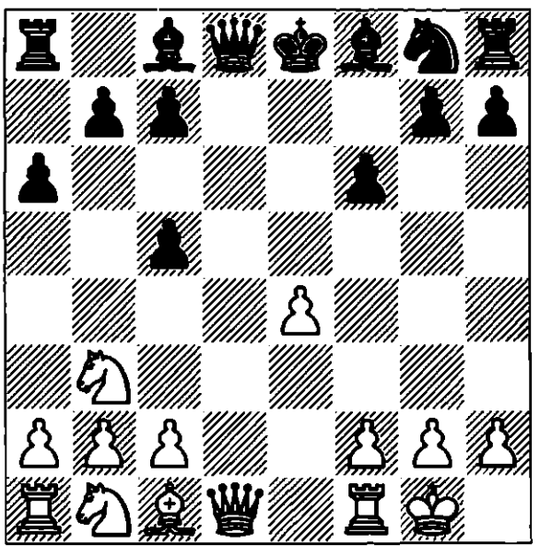
8 ♘b3 *(D)*

This is the main line, although 8 ♘e2 is growing in popularity. The knight isn't particularly well placed at b3, but the attack on the c5-pawn will soon ensure either the win of a tempo or that the knight can return to d4.

8...♕xd1 9 ♖xd1 ♗e6!?

We shall take this move as our main line even if it is not the most popular. Since the mid-1970s Black has tended to prefer the more sophisticated 9...♗g4 10 f3 ♗e6. The idea is that after a further ...c4 Black will try to demonstrate that the move f3 was mainly weakening, allowing ...♗c5 to come with a check or a pin. We recognize this logic, but still believe that f3

B



is generally a useful move for White. You will find that in many lines of the 9...♗e6 variation, White plays f3 anyway, thus giving Black an extra tempo compared to the 9...♗g4 variations. However, it is not as simple as that of course – when White is allowed to delay f3 for some moves, he may have organized his position so that Black is unable to exploit any disadvantages of the move.

8 The Exchange Variation

Of the three different versions of the Exchange Ruy Lopez, this has the great practical advantage that Black cannot avoid it if he wants to play 3...a6. Another great attraction is that it was honed into a dangerous tournament weapon by the great Bobby Fischer. Actually, this fact is enough to make it a legitimate choice for players who would otherwise be embarrassed to play such a colourless line.

Chapter Guide

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗xc6 (4...dxc6 5 0-0 f6 6 d4 exd4 7 ♘xd4 c5)

Line 8A: 8 ♘b3 178
Line 8B: 8 ♘e2 181
Line 8C: (6 d4 exd4 7 ♕xd4) 184
Line 8D: 5...♘e7!? 185
Line 8E: 5 d4 189
Line 8F: (5 ♘c3) 191

8A: Exchange Variation, Old Main Line

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 0-0 f6 6 d4 exd4 7 ♘xd4 c5 8 ♘b3 ♕xd1 9 ♖xd1 ♗e6)

10 ♗f4

For obvious reasons this is the main line: White develops his bishop to an active square with a threat. However, on f4 the bishop can also be subject to an attack connected with ...g5, which is often a useful move for Black, so some players prefer to place the bishop more modestly on e3:

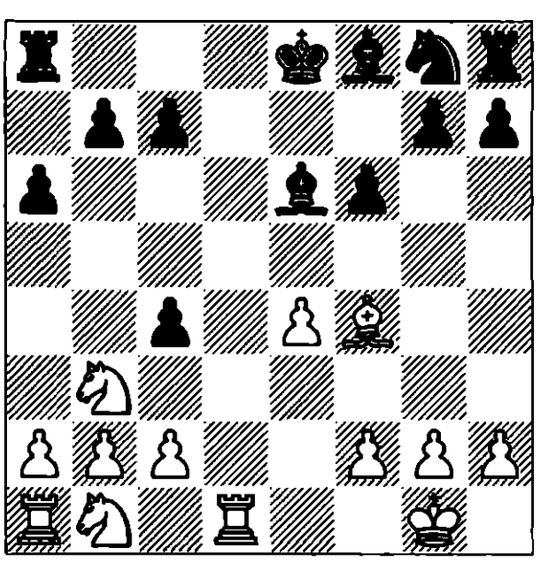
a) 10 ♗e3 b6 11 a4 c4 12 ♘d4 0-0-0 13 ♘c3 ♗f7 14 ♘c6 ♖d6 15 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 16 ♖d1 (after 16 a5 b5 17 ♖d1 ♗e8 18 ♘d4 ♗d7 the a5-pawn might turn out to be a weakness) 16...♘e7 ½-½ Sigurjonsson-Hoen, Haifa OL 1976; e.g., 17 ♖xd6 ♘xc6 18 ♖d2 (18 ♖xc6? ♔b7) 18...♖d8 19 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8, when Black's more active knight and White's vulnerable queenside ensure Black at least equality.

b) The common-sense move 10 ♘c3 allows Black to take command over the b8-h2 diagonal. Following 10...♗d6 11 ♗e3 b6 12 a4, Black must make a decision about his queenside pawn-formation. We believe Black should play 12...a5 even though it reduces his mobility and control over b5. Otherwise a5 from White may limit Black's options even more. After 13 ♘b5 0-0-0 White has tried:

b1) 14 ♖d2 ♘h6 15 ♘xd6+ ♖xd6 16 ♗xh6 gxh6 17 ♖xd6 cxd6 18 ♖d1 ♔c7 (White's b3-knight is particularly badly placed) 19 ♘c1 f5 20 f3 fxe4 21 fxe4 ♖e8 ∓ Carlier-M.Horvath, Budapest 1989.

b2) After 14 ♘xd6+ cxd6 15 ♗f4 d5 16 exd5 ♗xd5 Black is at least equal; for example, 17 ♘d2 ♘e7 18 ♖e1 ♘f5 19 c3 ♖he8 20 f3 h5 21 ♗g3 ♔b7 22 ♗f2 ♖xe1+ 23 ♗xe1 ♘e3 24 ♔f2 ♘c4 25 ♘xc4 ♗xc4 26 b4 ♖e8 27 bxc5 bxc5 28 ♖b1+ ♔c6 29 ♖b2 h4 30 g3 h3 31 g4 g5 32 ♗d2? ♖e2+ 33 ♔g3 ♖g2+ 34 ♔xh3 ♖g1 0-1 Ciocaltea-Gligorić, Hamburg Echt 1965.

10...c4! *(D)*



With this move Black ensures by tactical means that he will be able to castle queenside. In addition he secures some extra space on the queenside and frees the c5-square for the active deployment of his dark-squared bishop.

11 ♘d4

This is the natural move, centralizing the knight while attacking the unprotected bishop

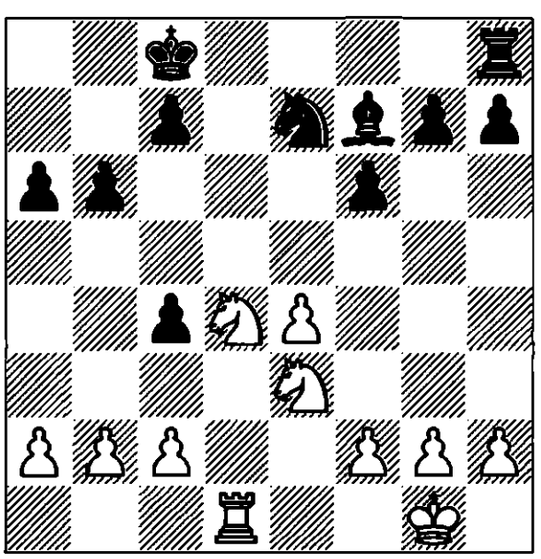
on e6. Nevertheless 11 ♘a5!? is a major alternative. After the forced 11...b6 12 ♘c6, it appears that Black is OK following 12...♗d7 13 ♘d4 0-0-0:

a) After 14 ♘c3 Black must be alert:

a1) 14...♗c5?! is an instructive mistake: 15 b4! ♗xd4 (15...♗xb4 16 ♘d5 ♗a3 17 ♖ab1 b5 18 ♘xc7 g5 19 ♗g3 ± or 15...cxb3 16 ♘xb3, when the c5-bishop has no good retreat-square) 16 ♖xd4 ♗e6 17 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 18 a4 ♘e7 19 a5 b5 20 ♖d1+ ♔c8 21 ♗e3 ♖e8 22 ♗c5 ± Stean-Lombardy, Teesside 1975.

a2) 14...♘e7 is better: 15 ♖d2 ♘g6 16 ♗g3 ♗b4 17 ♖ad1 ♖he8 18 ♘de2 ♗c5 and Black is equal as his pieces occupy good squares and White's kingside pawn-majority isn't felt at this point.

b) It seems that it's easier for White to untangle his pieces after 14 ♘d2. Kaufman already concludes that White has a slight advantage as 14...b5 permits an attack with 15 a4. Instead Black should play 14...♗g4 15 ♘4f3. Then all available games have continued 15...♗e6, when 16 ♘f1 ♖xd1 17 ♖xd1 ♗c5 18 ♗e3 ♗xe3 19 ♘xe3 ♘e7 20 ♘d4 ♗f7 *(D)* appears fine for Black:



b1) 21 f4 ♖e8 22 ♔f2 ♘g6 23 f5 ♘e5 with an equal position, A.Sokolovs-Baikov, Moscow 1992.

b2) 21 ♘df5 ♘xf5 22 ♘xf5 g6 23 ♘g3 c3! 24 b3 b5 25 ♘f1 a5 and Black developed good counterplay on the queenside in Toro Solis de Ovando-Ducret, corr. 1999.

b3) 21 ♘e2 ♖d8 22 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 23 ♔f1 b5 and while this endgame is not particularly joyful for Black, we believe that with a lot of space on the queenside already, he shouldn't have any major problems securing the draw.

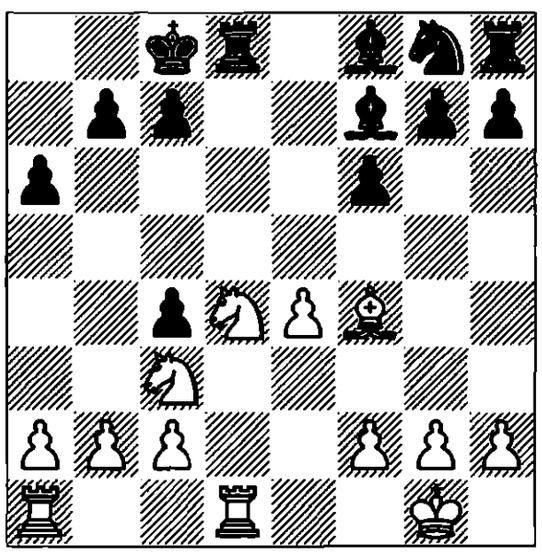
11...0-0-0

It is this (rather obvious) tactical point that makes the entire line playable.

12 ♘c3

Now there is a genuine threat to the e6-bishop again. Obviously the 'clever' 12 ♗xc7? fails badly to 12...♖xd4!.

12...♗f7 *(D)*



This is a critical position. Black is behind in development but now his pieces are ready to enter the field. White has scored miserably so far (in the parallel position from the 9...♗g4 line where White's pawn is on f3, White at least comes close to scoring 50%). However, this doesn't necessarily indicate that Black is already better. It may well be that White's poor score mainly reflects an unfortunate attitude by some white players – either playing only for a draw or expecting their long-term assets sooner or later to win the game for them without too much need for calculation.

13 ♘f5

This looks like White's most active move, but according to our databases White has so far not won a single over-the-board game with it. Therefore a look at the alternatives seems in place:

a) 13 f3 ♗c5 14 ♗e3 ♘e7 15 ♔f2 happened in Meijers-Bejaoui, Werther 2004 and here we recommend 15...♗d6!?, when White has to use a lot of energy contemplating whether Black intends to advance his queenside pawns. In a practical chess game, such matters should not be underestimated.

b) 13 ♘d5 is lightly tested but at least it contains a positional trap:

b1) Black should avoid 13...♗xd5?! 14 exd5 ♖xd5 15 ♘e6, when White's initiative far outweighs the pawn.

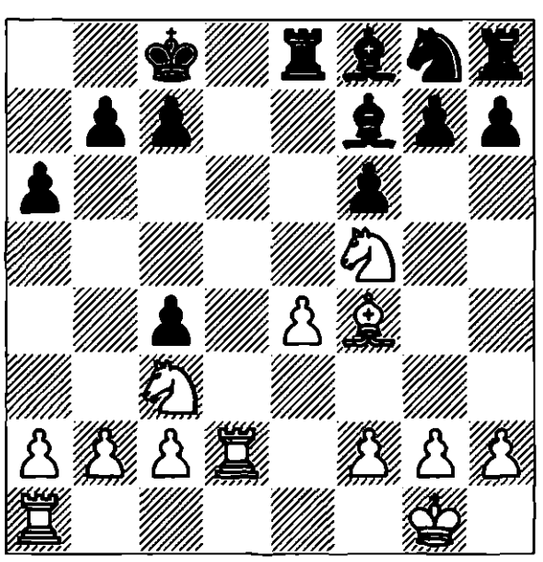
b2) 13...♗c5!, defending the c7-pawn indirectly, looks more than satisfactory for Black:

b21) 14 c3 ♖e8 15 ♘f5 (15 f3 ♗xd5 16 exd5 ♘e7 is much better for Black) 15...♖xe4 16 ♗xc7 ♘e7 17 ♘fxe7+ ♗xe7 18 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7 19 ♗f4 ♖e2 ∓.

b22) 14 ♘f5 g6 15 ♘fe3 ♖e8 16 ♘c3 g5 17 ♗g3 ♘e7 (17...♗xe3 18 fxe3 h5 is also very comfortable for Black) 18 ♘g4 ♘g8 (the obvious 18...f5 looks OK too) 19 ♘d5 (19 ♘e3 is better) 19...♖xe4 20 ♘gxf6 ♘xf6 21 ♘xf6 ♖e7 22 ♔f1 c3! and Black had taken over the initiative in Khrushchov-Kharitonov, Moscow 2002.

13...♖e8 14 ♖d2 *(D)*

After 14 ♘e3 ♘e7 15 ♗g3 h5 16 h4 g5 17 ♔f1 ♗g7 18 ♘cd5 ♘xd5 19 exd5 gxh4 the bishops were displaying their full power in Agopov-Belozerov, Tallinn jr Ech 1997. Black would have met 20 ♗xh4 by 20...♗g6 with equal chances.



14...♘e7 15 ♘xe7+ ♗xe7

ECO assesses this position as equal, which seems reasonable.

16 ♖ad1 ♖d8 17 ♘d5 ♗xd5 18 ♖xd5 b5 19 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 20 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 21 ♗e3 a5 22 f4 a4

White can't prevent ...a3 from Black (23 a3? c3! ∓). That means that Black will be able to transform his numerical queenside majority into a real one by the help of his timely pawn advances on the queenside. It is not even clear that White has a nominal advantage as Black's passed pawn will be the distant one.

Conclusion:

In this line it is White who has something to prove. If Black plays actively, his bishop-pair seems to secure at least equal chances.

Illustrative Game 28

Spiridonov – Spassky

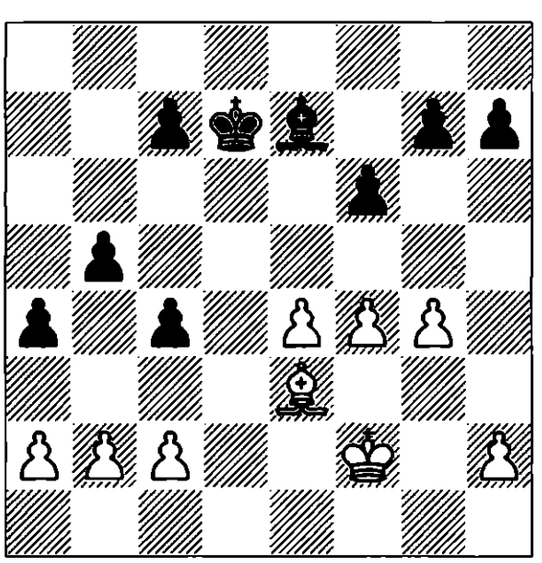
Sochi 1973

23 ♔f2 ♔d7 24 g4?! *(D)*

This is criticized by Soltis, who claims that 24 ♔f3!?, as in Grodzhensky-Koshil, corr. 1985, wins. However, it appears to be only a modest improvement, and we suggest 24...a3!, which seems to hold the balance. We only give a few sample lines:

a) After 25 b3 cxb3 26 cxb3 c5 there is no reason why Black's majority should be less potent than White's.

b) 25 bxa3 ♗xa3 26 g4 c5 27 h4 ♔d6 28 g5 ♗b2 and now the attractive drawing line 29 ♔g4 (or 29 f5 ♗e5 30 h5 fxg5! – avoiding all tricks connected with h6 and g6 – 31 ♗xg5 b4, etc.) 29...b4 30 gxf6 gxf6 31 ♔f5 ♗d4 32 ♗c1 c3 33 h5 c4 34 h6 ♔e7 35 e5 fxe5 36 fxe5 ♗f2 37 ♗g5+ ♔e8 38 ♔e6 ♗c5! (threatening ...b3 followed by ...♗a3) 39 ♗c1 ♗f2 (with the idea ...♗e1-d2) 40 ♗g5 ♗c5 =.



24...g5!

A strong move, securing e5 for the king after 25 fxg5 fxg5 or 25 f5. Soltis thinks Black has a slight advantage now.

25 e5 gxf4 26 ♗xf4 ♔e6 27 exf6 ♗xf6 28 ♗c1 ♔d5 29 ♔f3 b4 30 g5 ♗e5 31 h4 b3 32 axb3 cxb3 33 cxb3 axb3 34 h5 ♗g7 35 g6 h6

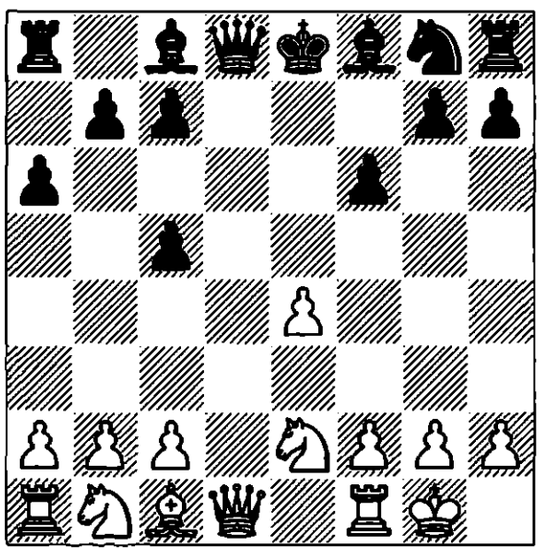
35...hxg6 36 hxg6 c5 37 ♔f4 c4 38 ♔f5 c3 39 bxc3 ♗xc3 is also a dead draw.

36 ♔e2 c5 37 ♗d2 c4 38 ♗c3 ♗xc3 39 bxc3 ♔e6 ½-½

8B: Exchange Variation, Modern Line

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 0-0 f6 6 d4 exd4 7 ♘xd4 c5)

8 ♘e2 *(D)*



B

This move has only become popular relatively recently. White's knight is a little less active than on b3 but White's knights will usually cooperate better in the end.

8...♕xd1 9 ♖xd1 ♗d7

This is Black's most popular move, and a very efficient way to complete development.

10 ♘bc3

In principle this is the most flexible as it reveals the least about White's plans for his dark-squared bishop. In reality it doesn't matter as Black will castle queenside in any case, after which White cannot delay the decision anyway. The alternatives may easily turn out to be pure transpositions:

a) 10 ♗e3 0-0-0 11 ♘bc3 – *10 ♘bc3 0-0-0 11 ♗e3.*

b) 10 ♗f4 0-0-0 11 c4 (11 ♘bc3 – *10 ♘bc3 0-0-0 11 ♗f4*) 11...♘e7 12 ♘bc3 ♘g6 13 ♗g3 ♘e5 14 b3 ♗d6 15 ♘d5 ♗e6! 16 ♘ec3 c6 17 ♘e3 (17 ♘b6+ ♔c7 18 ♘ba4 b5 ∓) 17...♗c7! and we prefer Black's position. White has irreparable weaknesses on the d-file as a result of his premature c4 advance.

10...0-0-0 11 ♗e3

White must finally decide where to put his bishop. 11 ♗f4 looks more active, but here the bishop is a target that Black can use to accelerate his kingside development. After 11...♘e7 database statistics show a positive score for Black. That of course doesn't prove anything but it seems to be supported by analysis:

a) 12 ♖d2 ♘g6 13 ♗g3 ♘e5 14 ♗xe5 (14 b3 c4 15 f4 ♘g4 16 h3 ♗c5+ 17 ♔h1 ♘e3 18 ♗f2 ♗c6 ∓ Prié-Bertola, corr. 1991) 14...fxe5 15 ♖ad1 c4 16 ♔f1 ♗c5 17 ♘g1 (Fischer-Spassky, Sveti Stefan/Belgrade (27) 1992) 17...♖hf8! ∓.

b) 12 ♘d5 ♘xd5 13 ♖xd5 ♗e7 14 ♖ad1 ♗e6 15 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 16 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 17 ♘c3 ♗d6 18 ♗xd6 cxd6 19 f3 ♔d7 20 ♔f2 ♔c6 = Braga-Garcia Palermo, Zaragoza 1992.

c) After 12 ♗g3 ♘c6 White has tried:

c1) 13 f3 ♘e5 14 ♘d5 ♗d6 15 ♘ef4 h5 = Teichmeister-Posylek, corr. 1999.

c2) 13 h4 ♘e5 14 ♗xe5 fxe5 15 ♘d5 c4 16 ♘e3 ♗e6 17 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 18 b3 cxb3 19 axb3 ♗c5 ∓ Glek-Brunner, Bundesliga 1991/2.

c3) After 13 ♘d5 ♘e5, White must show restraint:

c31) 14 f4?! is probably too optimistic:

c311) Black played very energetically in Asmundsson-Nyysti, Istanbul Ech 2003: 14...♘c4 15 b3 ♗g4 16 ♖e1 ♘a3 17 ♖ac1 c4 18 ♗f2 ♗d6 19 ♘ec3 c6 20 ♘b6+ ♔b8 21 e5 fxe5 22 fxe5 ♗b4 ∓.

c312) 14...♘f7 also seems sufficient: 15 a4 ♗c6 16 ♘ec3 ♘d6 17 f5 ♘xe4 18 ♘xc7 ♖xd1+ 19 ♖xd1 ♘xc3 20 bxc3 ♗e7 ∓ Ljubojević-Romanishin, Riga IZ 1979.

c32) 14 ♘ef4 c4 15 f3 h5 16 ♗f2 h4 17 h3 ♖e8 18 ♘e3 ♗d6 19 ♘fd5 ♔b8 20 ♘b6 ♗e6 21 ♘bd5 ♖d8 = Z.Nikolić-P.Nikolić, Bor 1986.

c33) After 14 b3 ♗d6 White may have a path to equality:

c331) 15 c4 – *10 ♗f4 0-0-0 11 c4 ♘e7 12 ♘bc3 ♘g6 13 ♗g3 ♘e5 14 b3 ♗d6 15 ♘d5.*

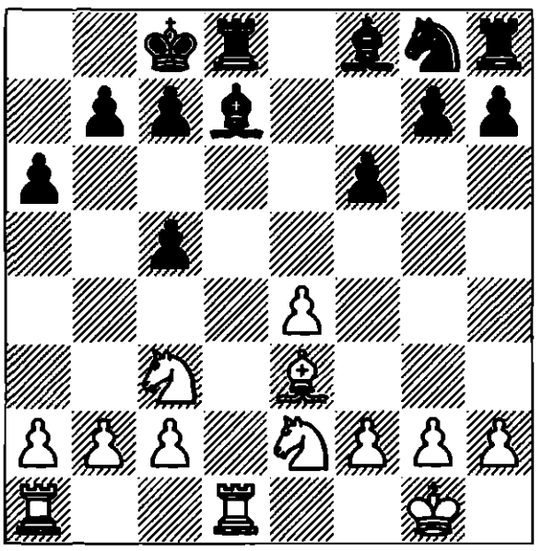
c332) 15 ♘b6+?! cxb6 16 ♖xd6 ♗c6 17 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 ∓.

c333) 15 f3 ♗e6 16 c4 ♖he8 17 ♘ec3 c6 18 ♘b6+ ♔c7 19 ♘ca4 g5 20 ♖d2 ♗e7 21 ♖ad1 ♖xd2 22 ♖xd2 ♖d8 = Van der Wiel-P.Nikolić, Wijk aan Zee 1988.

c334) 15 ♗xe5 fxe5 16 c4 (16 ♘g3 g6 ∓) 16...♗e6 17 a4 a5 = Kagan-Brook, Israeli Ch 1986.

c335) 15 ♖d2 b5 16 h4 ♗g4 17 ♖ad1 = Rausis-D.Gonzales, Andorra 1994.

We now return to the position after 11 ♗e3 *(D)*:



11...♖e8

It is nice to get out of any potential pins on the open d-file. For the moment, the dark-squared bishop is best placed on f8, as the following game demonstrates: 11...♗d6?! 12 ♗f4 ♗xf4 13 ♘xf4 ♘e7 14 f3 ♘g6 15 ♘h5! ♖hg8 16 ♖d2 ♗e6 17 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 18 ♖d1+ ♔c8 19 ♘d5 c6 20 ♘e3 ♘e7 21 g4 ♗f7 22 ♘g3 ♖d8 23 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 24 b3 and White had a rather promising pawn configuration on both sides and went on to win in Leko-Vallejo, Monaco (Amber blindfold) 2006. Black's counterplay on the queenside is clearly lagging here. This is the sort of depressing endgame that Black should try to avoid at all cost.

12 ♖d2 ♗c6 13 ♖ad1 b6 14 f3

This is a move that White will usually have to play at some point, so most alternatives may well merge with this line:

a) 14 ♘d5 ♘e7 15 c4 ♘xd5 16 exd5 ♗d7 17 ♗f4 ♗d6 18 ♗xd6 cxd6 19 f3 = Rozentalis-Milos, Tilburg 1992.

b) 14 h4 ♘e7 15 h5 f5 16 e5 ♗b7 17 ♗g5 ♘c6 18 ♘g3 ♘d4 19 ♘ce2 ♘e6 20 ♗h4 g5 21 hxg6 hxg6 22 ♗f6 ♖g8 = Van der Wiel-Morović, Wijk aan Zee 1994.

c) 14 ♗f4 ♘e7 15 g4 ♘g6 16 ♗g3 h5! ∓ Brunner-Adams, Biel IZ 1993.

d) 14 ♘f4 is White's main alternative. After 14...♘h6 White has tried:

d1) 15 ♘fd5 ♘g4 16 ♗f4 ♘e5 and we have a further split:

d11) 17 ♗g3 ♔b7 18 ♘e3 g6 (we quite like the look of 18...h5! here) 19 ♗h4 ♗g7 20 f4 ♘f7 21 ♘ed5 ± V.Ivanov-Gavrilov, Moscow Ch 1992.

d12) 17 b3 ♔b7 18 ♘e3 (18 f3 ♗d6 19 ♔f2 ♖hf8 20 g4 g5 21 ♗g3 h5 22 gxh5 f5 23 exf5 ♖xf5 ∓ Haapasalo-Emelin, Jyväskylä 1999) 18...h5 19 h3 g6 20 ♘cd5 ♗g7 21 ♖e2 ♖hf8 22 ♖de1 ♗b5 (22...f5!?) 23 c4 ♗d7 24 ♖d1 ♗c8 25 ♗g3 ♖f7 26 f4 ♘c6 = Oral-Jenni, Calvia OL 2004.

d2) After 15 f3 ♘f7 there is another split:

d21) 16 ♘cd5 ♘d6 17 b3 f5! 18 exf5 ♘xf5 19 ♗f2 ♗d6 20 ♘h5 ♗e5 and Black had a very active position and excellent chances in Van der Wiel-Tkachev, Cannes 1999.

d22) 16 ♘fd5 ♘e5 17 ♗f4 ♔b7 18 ♘e3 ♗d6 19 ♗g3 g6 20 ♘cd5 ♖hf8 with standard play in Volzhin-Korneev, Russia Cup (Ekaterinburg) 1997.

d23) 16 b3 ♘e5 17 ♘h5 f5!? (the immediate 17...c4 is very interesting as well) 18 ♗f4 fxe4 19 ♘xe4 c4 20 ♖d4 cxb3 21 cxb3 ♘g6 22 ♗g3 ♗xe4 23 ♖xe4 ♗c5+ and the position was balanced in Zhang Zhong-Van der Wiel, Wijk aan Zee 2003.

14...♘e7 15 ♘f4

Activating the idle knight is obviously a very natural plan. Still, it is surprising that this is the only move encountered in practice. However, finding relevant alternatives is not easy at all; White's other pieces are all optimally placed!

15...♘g6 16 ♘xg6 hxg6 17 ♗f4

After 17 ♘d5 ♗xd5 18 ♖xd5 ♗d6, White's exchange sacrifice 19 ♖xd6!? proved only sufficient for equality in Macieja-Naiditsch, Kusadasi Ech 2006: 19...cxd6 20 ♖xd6 ♔b7 21 ♖d7+ ♔c6 22 ♖xg7 ♖hg8 =.

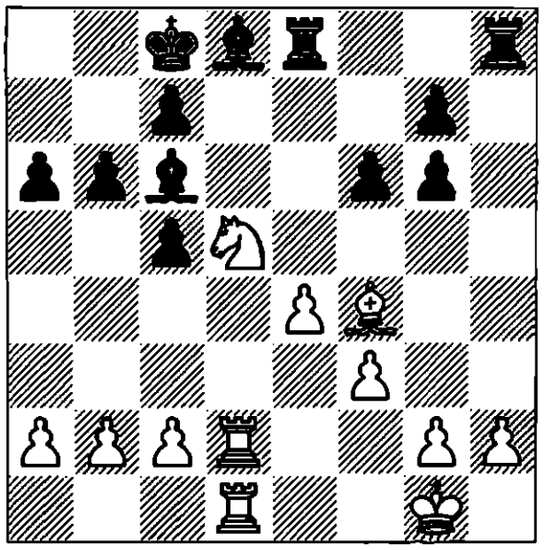
17...♗e7 18 ♘d5 ♗d8! *(D)*

Superficially this may look unnecessarily passive, but in reality Black keeps g5 under control while freeing all his other pieces for activity. He is now ready to regroup however he chooses to, while trying to weaken White's kingside pawns with his own minority.

19 ♗g3

a) 19 ♘e3 g5 20 ♗g3 – *19 ♗g3 g5 20 ♘e3.*

b) 19 b3 a5 20 a4 f5 21 ♖e2 c4! 22 bxc4 fxe4 23 fxe4 ♗xa4 24 e5 ♗d7 with a slight advantage for Black, Dvorak-Biolek, Czech Cht 2003/4.



c) 19 c4 f5! (19...g5 20 ♗g3 g6 is also interesting) 20 ♖e2 g5 21 ♗g3 ♖h6 22 ♖de1 f4 23 ♗f2 ♗d7 24 h3 ♖eh8 25 ♔f1 c6 ∓ Shaw-Stefanova, Catalan Bay 2004; e.g., 26 ♘c3 ♗e6 27 b3 ♗c7 going to e5. On 28 e5, 28...♗f5! is very strong.

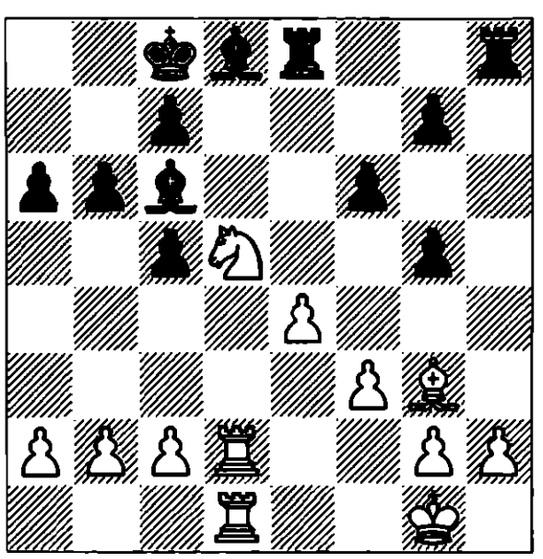
19...g5 *(D)*

19...f5 is an alternative way to implement Black's general plan:

a) 20 e5 g5 21 ♖e2 f4 22 ♗e1 ♗b5 23 ♖e4 ♗d7 24 h3 c6 25 ♘c3 ♗c7 26 ♘a4 ♗f5 ∓ S.Kasparov-Harikrishna, Abu Dhabi 2003.

b) 20 ♘f4 ♗g5 21 ♘xg6 ♗xd2 22 ♖xd2 (Vysochin-Payen, Cappelle la Grande 2004) 22...♖d8! and only Black can be better.

c) 20 ♖e2 fxe4 21 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 22 fxe4 ♖e8 23 e5 (Glek-Slobodjan, French Cht 2003) 23...c4! and Black should be more than fine.



20 ♘e3

Black's plan to advance his kingside pawns can only be delayed – not stopped. The fact that Black has a concrete plan in ...g6 and ...f5, increasing the scope of the bishops, restricting White's pieces and weakening White's pawn-chain, will give him the better chances in the long run.

Conclusion:

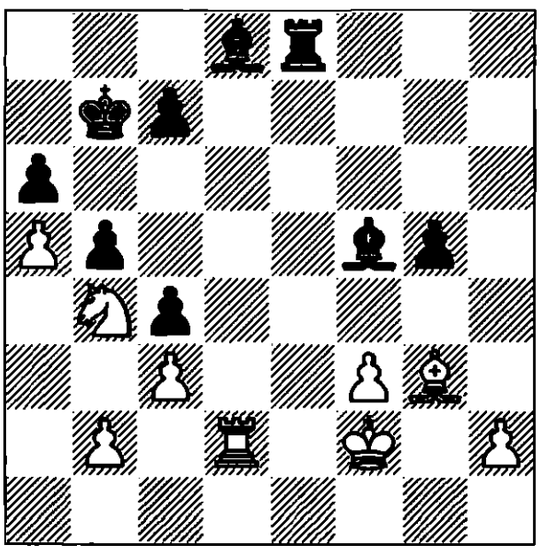
It seems quite likely that in this line, Black's bishop-pair will eventually be the dominant feature of the position.

Illustrative Game 29

C. Balogh – Bacrot

Bastia rpd 2004

20...g6 21 ♗f2 ♖h7 22 g4 ♖d7 23 ♗g3 ♖xd2 24 ♖xd2 ♗d7 25 ♔f2 ♗e6 26 a4 c4 27 c3 ♗d7 28 a5 b5 29 ♘d5 f5 30 exf5 gxf5 31 gxf5 ♗xf5 32 ♘b4 ♔b7 *(D)*



By now it's becoming obvious that Black is better. There are several factors defining his advantage: White has weak pawns on a5 and f3 that can easily be attacked, while the d8-bishop defends Black's potential pawn weaknesses. The bishop-pair normally excels in open positions. And finally it is important that the white knight is without any solid place to settle down.

33 ♖d5 ♗c8 34 ♖c5 ♗d7 35 ♖d5 ♗c8 36 ♖c5 ♖e6 37 ♖d5 ♗e7 38 ♘c2 c6 39 ♖d2 ♖f6 40 ♔g2 ♖f8 41 ♖e2 ♗d8 42 ♗d6 ♖f7 43 ♗b4 ♖f5 44 ♖e8?

44 ♗e7 is a far better try.

44...♖d5 45 ♘e3 ♖d2+ 46 ♔g1 ♗c7 47 ♖e7 ♔b8

Black has organized his bishop-pair perfectly and White's position collapses:

48 ♘g4 ♗xg4 49 fxg4 ♗xh2+ 50 ♔f1 ♗f4 51 ♗c5 ♖xb2 52 ♖a7 ♗d6 53 ♗b6 b4 54 ♖d7 ♗f4 55 ♖d8+ ♔b7 56 ♖d7+ ♔c8 57 ♖d8+ ♔b7 58 ♖d7+ ♔a8 59 ♖d8+ ♗b8 60 cxb4 c3

One must assume that White would have resigned at this point if it hadn't been a rapid game.

61 ♗e3 c2 62 ♖g8 ♖b1+ 63 ♔e2 c1♕ 64 ♗xc1 ♖xc1 65 ♖xg5 ♖c4 66 ♖g8 ♖xb4 67 g5 ♖g4 68 g6 ♔b7 69 g7 ♗e5 70 ♔e1 0-1

8C: Exchange Variation, 7 ♕xd4 and Rare 6th Moves

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 0-0 f6)

6 d4

There really isn't much to be gained from the alternatives:

a) 6 ♘xe5?! isn't really suitable for a tournament game, but it has some shock value, and could be a useful (or at least fun) line for blitz games. After 6...fxe5 7 ♕h5+ ♔e7 8 ♕xe5+ ♔f7, White's immediate attack has already run out of steam, but against slightly inaccurate defence, White's central pawns could prove powerful.

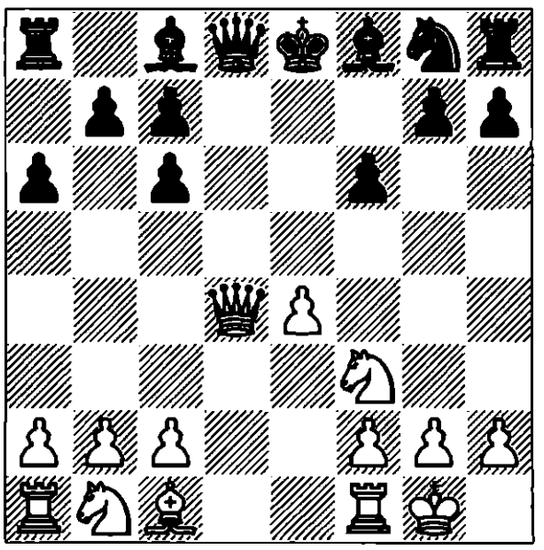
b) 6 ♕e2 c5 7 d3 ♗g4 8 ♗e3 ♗d6 9 ♘bd2 ♘e7 10 h3 ♗h5 11 ♘c4 ♘c6 12 c3 0-0 13 a3 a5 = Souleidis-Markidis, Ermioni Argolidas 2005.

c) 6 d3 ♗g4 7 ♗e3 ♗d6 8 ♘bd2 ♘e7 9 h3 ♗h5 10 c3 0-0 11 ♕b3+ ♗f7 ½-½ Vorotnikov-I.Zaitsev, Moscow 1996. Note that White's queen is trapped after 12 ♕xb7?? ♕d7.

d) 6 c3 ♕d3 7 ♕e1 ♗c5 ∓ 8 h3? ♗xh3 –+ Sanchez Garcia-Acebal Muniz, Spain 1997.

e) 6 ♘c3 is a common-sense move that should neither win nor lose the game for White. 6...♗g4 7 d3 ♗d6 8 h3 ♗h5 9 g4?! ♗f7 10 d4 exd4 (10...h5! is very strong) 11 ♕xd4 looked fine for Black in Davila-M.Kumar, Calvia OL 2004 until he played the rather incomprehensible 11...♔f8?!. It is not a blunder, but one wonders if Black touched his king by accident. After 11...♘e7 or 11...♕e7 Black is better.

6...exd4 7 ♕xd4 *(D)*


B

This naturally leads to positions reminiscent of those we examined in Lines 8A and 8B. White's problem is that he will be slightly less active, as he doesn't get his rook to d1 for free.

7...♕xd4 8 ♘xd4 ♗d7

8...c5 scores excellently too, and leads to play even more reminiscent of the lines we examined after 7 ♘xd4. However, we believe Black is more solid after the bishop move.

9 ♘c3

Here too, White must decide where to develop his dark-squared bishop, and it makes sense (if not much difference) to await Black's reply.

a) 9 ♗f4 0-0-0 10 ♘d2 (10 ♘c3 – *9 ♘c3 0-0-0 10 ♗f4*) 10...g5 11 ♗e3 ♘h6 12 h3 ♘f7 13 ♘c4 h5 14 ♖ad1 g4 ∓ Swiebocki-Borowski, Wisla 2000.

b) 9 ♗e3 0-0-0 10 ♘d2 (10 ♘c3 – *9 ♘c3 0-0-0 10 ♗e3*) 10...♘e7 11 ♘4b3 b6 12 a4 a5 13 ♘c4 c5 14 ♖fd1 ♘c6 15 ♗f4 ♗e7 16 ♘e3 ♗e6 = Mihalko-Yandemirov, Budapest 1993; for example, 17 ♘d5 ♗xd5 18 exd5 ♘b4 19 c4, when Black is at least equal after 19...♗d6 or 19...♖he8.

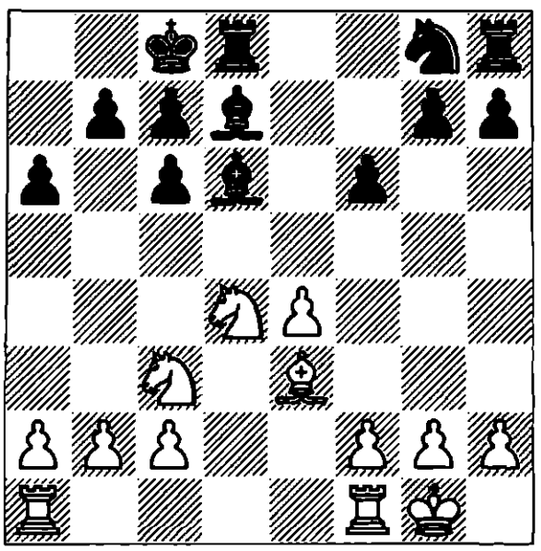
9...0-0-0 10 ♗e3

Unless White is prepared to straighten out Black's queenside pawns, 10 ♗f4 doesn't make much sense: 10...♗d6 11 ♗xd6 cxd6 12 a4 (12 ♖fd1 ½-½ Safin-Vakhidov, Petermänschen 1997) 12...a5 13 ♖fd1 ♔c7 14 ♖d3 ♘e7 15 ♖ad1 b6 16 ♘ce2 ♘g6 17 ♖c3 ♔b7 18 ♘g3 ♘e7 19 ♖cd3 ♔c7 and now quite a nice tactical sequence which only confirms that chances are balanced: 20 ♘h5 ♗g4 21 ♘xg7 ♗xd1 22 ♘ge6+ ♔d7 23 ♘xd8 ♗xc2 24 ♘xc2 ♖xd8 = Baker-Lane, British Ch (Brighton) 1980.

10...♗d6 *(D)*

11 ♖ad1!

With this move, White actually makes some sense out of his opening play. It can be argued that in the 7 ♘xd4 lines, White's queen's rook


W

was hard to bring into play with its colleague already occupying d1.

Another attempt to make something positive out of the characteristic features of the position is 11 ♘b3, hoping to use the c5-square:

a) 11...b6!? makes a lot of sense, but has so far only been tested in an under-10 tournament.

b) 11...♘e7 12 ♘c5 ♗xc5 13 ♗xc5 and now:

b1) 13...♘g6 14 ♖ad1 ♗e6 15 a3 b6 16 ♗e3 ♘e5 17 ♗c1 c5 18 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 19 ♖d1 ♖xd1+ 20 ♘xd1 ♘c4 21 f3 a5 22 ♔f2 ♔d7 ½-½ Ghinda-Stoica, Timisoara 1987.

b2) 13...♖he8 14 ♖ad1 b6 15 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 16 ♖d3 ♗e6 17 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 ½-½ Malaniuk-Kupreichik, Minsk 1985. We find the draw slightly odd here, as after 18 ♖d1+ White's position is the type you might find in textbooks with a comment like 'and White can play for a win without risk'. 18...♖d7 19 ♖xd7+ ♔xd7 is indeed better for White, although a quick ...f5 might be the recipe here as well. However, after 18...♔e8! followed by a quick ...f5 things might not be so rosy for White after all. Upon closer investigation it seems that White has no time to consolidate his endgame advantage.

11...♘e7 12 f3

12 ♘de2 ♘g6 13 f3 ♖he8 14 ♗f2 ♘f4 15 ♘xf4 ♗xf4 16 ♗g3 ♗e3+ 17 ♗f2 ♗f4 18 ♗g3 ½-½ Ignatiev-Plachetka, Odessa 1976.

12...♖he8 13 ♖fe1

½-½ Moldovan-Ghitescu, Calimanesti 1992.

Conclusion:

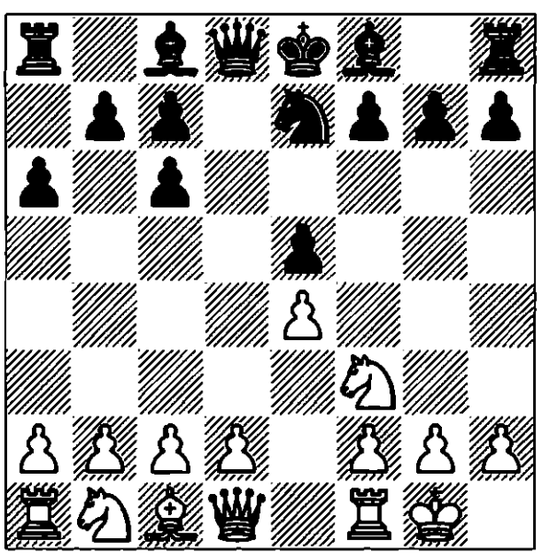
We have not found anyone fighting it out from this position, but it appears that it will be easier for Black to improve his position than for White.

8D: Exchange Variation, 5...♘e7

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 0-0)

The Exchange Variation is a forcing way to lead the play into a structure familiar to White. We believe we have demonstrated that 5...f6 is sufficient for at least equality but that may not be enough to make it a tempting prospect if your opponent has a lot of experience playing the thematic positions. Therefore we offer a second option of a wholly different character:

5...♘e7!? *(D)*


W

This is an attempt to take play back into Black's backyard. If White doesn't want Black to equalize easily (i.e. allowing ...♘g6, which comfortably protects e5), he will have to capture the pawn, after which play tends to become extremely sharp. Black will often remain a pawn down for quite a while, but his compensation is considerable and fairly long-term.

6 ♘xe5

Other moves allow Black to complete his development without any difficulties. Play will be reminiscent of the lines we examine in Line 8F but without Black having had to play the somewhat cumbersome ...f6:

a) 6 c3 ♘g6 7 d4 ♗g4 8 ♗e3 ♗d6 9 ♘bd2 0-0 10 h3 ♗xf3 11 ♘xf3 ♕e7 =.

b) 6 d3 ♘g6 7 ♗e3 ♗d6 8 d4 ♗g4 9 h3 ♗xf3 10 ♕xf3 0-0 11 dxe5 ♗xe5 12 c3 ♕e7 = Martinović-Nikolac, Vrnjačka Banja 1978.

c) 6 ♘a3 f6 7 ♘c4 c5 8 d3 ♗g4 9 ♘e3 ♗h5 10 c3 ♘c6 = Torre-Z.Almasi, Elista OL 1998.

d) 6 d4 exd4 (6...♗g4!?) and now:

d1) 7 ♘xd4 c5 8 ♘b3 (or 8 ♘e2 ♕xd1 9 ♖xd1 ♗d7 10 ♘bc3 0-0-0 with normal play)

8...♕xd1 9 ♖xd1 ♘g6 10 ♘c3 ♗d7 11 ♗e3 b6 = *NCO*.

d2) 7 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 8 ♘xd4 c5 and now:

d21) 9 ♘b3 ♘c6 looks very harmonious for Black; e.g., 10 ♗f4 ♗d6 11 ♗xd6 cxd6 12 ♘c3 ♗e6 =.

d22) 9 ♘e2 ♗d7 10 ♗e3 ♘c6 11 ♘bc3 0-0-0 12 ♖ad1 ♗d6 13 a3 f6 14 ♘d5 ♗e6 15 ♘ec3 b5 with equality, Vavra-Trapl, Czech Cht 2002/3.

6...♕d4 7 ♕h5!?

This leads to immense complications but is the only way for White to keep his extra pawn.

7 ♘f3 wins a couple of tempi on Black's exposed queen and must be met accurately, but it seems that Black can survive and then have excellent chances with the bishop-pair in an open position. After 7...♕xe4 we have:

a) 8 ♘c3 ♕g6 9 ♘e5 ♕f5 10 ♖e1 f6 11 ♘f3 ♕h5 12 b3 ♗g4 13 ♗a3 ♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 ♕xf3 15 gxf3 ♖d8 ∓ Ligterink-Velimirović, Amsterdam 1976.

b) After 8 ♖e1 ♕g6 9 ♘e5, it seems that Black has a choice between two playable moves:

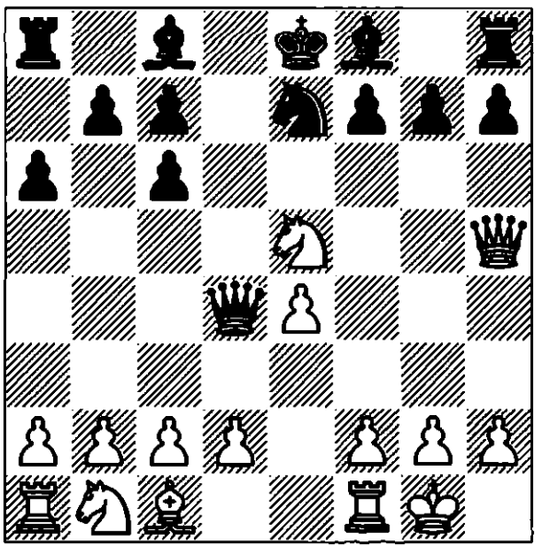
b1) 9...♕f6 10 d4 ♗f5 11 ♘c3 0-0-0 12 ♕h5 ♗g6 13 ♕h3+ (Ree-Keres, Amsterdam 1971; 13 ♘xg6 ♕xg6 14 ♕xg6 ♘xg6 is equal – Black's doubled pawns are no weakness) 13...♗f5 is equal and could well end with a repetition.

b2) 9...♕f5 10 d4 h5! (the surprising idea 10...♗e6 11 ♘d2 0-0-0? 12 g4! followed by ♘e4 is a good reason to play ...h5) and now:

b21) 11 ♘c3 ♗e6 12 ♘e4 0-0-0 13 ♘c5 ♘g6 14 ♘xg6 ♕xg6 15 ♘xe6 fxe6 16 c3 ♗d6!? is fine for Black, who controls d5.

b22) 11 c3 ♗e6 12 ♘d2 f6 13 ♘ec4 0-0-0 14 ♕e2 ♗f7 and in Knoppert-Piket, Dutch Cht 1992 Black slowly untangled while keeping his bishop-pair intact.

We now return to 7 ♕h5 *(D)*:


B

7...g6 8 ♕g5

A major alternative is 8 ♘f3 ♕xe4 9 ♕a5, which can lead to huge complications after 9...♗g4 10 ♖e1 ♕d5:

a) 11 ♕xc7 has largely resulted in short draws at top level: 11...♗xf3 12 gxf3 ♕xf3 13 ♕xb7 (13 d3 ♕g4+ 14 ♕g3 ♕xg3+ 15 hxg3 = Brunner-Yilmaz, Manila OL 1992) 13...♕g4+ 14 ♔f1 ♕h3+ 15 ♔g1 ♕g4+ 16 ♔f1 ♕h3+ ½-½ Ljubojević-Ivanchuk, Moscow OL 1994.

b) 11 ♕c3 is critical but it seems that all winning attempts end up with an advantage to Black. After 11...♗xf3! 12 ♕xh8 ♕g5 13 g3 ♕h5 14 ♕f6 0-0-0 15 d3 ♗g7 White must be careful:

b1) 16 ♕xf7? seems to be just too risky after 16...♗d5:

b11) 17 ♕f4 ♘f5 18 c4 ♘d4 19 cxd5 ♘f3+ 20 ♔f1 ♘xe1 21 ♔xe1 ♖e8+ 22 ♗e3 ♗xb2 ∓.

b12) 17 ♕xg7 ♕f3 18 ♔f1 (18 ♖e4 ♗xe4 −+) 18...♕g2+ 19 ♔e2 ♗f3+ 20 ♔d2 (20 ♔e3 ♘f5+ −+) 20...♕xf2+ 21 ♔c3 ♘d5+ 22 ♔c4 ♕b6 −+.

b13) 17 ♕xe7 ♕f3! leaves White defenceless: 18 ♔f1 (18 ♖e4 ♗d4 19 ♗e3 ♗xe3 20 fxe3 ♕d1+ 21 ♔g2 ♕xc2+ 22 ♔h3 ♗xe4 23 ♕xe4 ♕xb2 −+) 18...♕g2+ 19 ♔e2 ♗f3+ 20 ♔d2 (20 ♔e3 ♗h6+ −+) 20...♕xf2+ 21 ♖e2 ♗h6+ 22 ♔c3 ♕d4+ 23 ♔b3 and in Sveshnikov-Volzhin, Erevan open 1996, Black could have won with 23...♗xc1, as 24 ♘c3 ♗d5+ leads to a quick mate.

b2) 16 ♕f4? g5! 17 g4 (17 ♕e3? ♘f5 −+) 17...♗xg4 18 ♕xg5 ♕xg5 19 ♗xg5 ♗xb2 20 ♗xe7 ♖e8! ∓.

b3) 16 ♕h4! ♕xh4 17 gxh4 ♘f5 18 ♘d2 ♘xh4 =.

8...♗g7 9 ♘d3

This makes a slightly artificial impression, but by taking the b4-square away from Black's queen, White ensures that Black cannot take back his pawn yet.

After the more natural 9 ♘f3 ♕xe4 10 ♖e1 ♕b4, White has not been able to achieve more than equality:

a) 11 d4 ♗e6 12 c3 ♕b5 13 ♘a3 ♕d5 14 ♗f4 h6 15 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 16 ♗e5 ♗xe5 17

♘xe5 g5 18 ♘d3 0-0-0 19 ♘c5 ♗f5 = Zelčić-Degraeve, Makarska 1997.

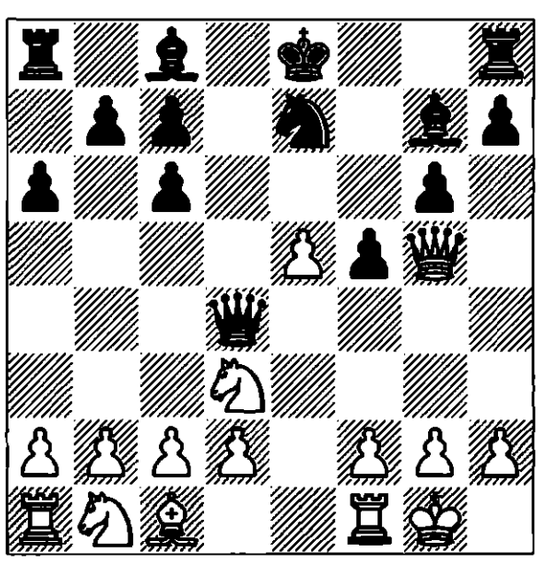
b) 11 c3 ♕d6 12 d4 h6 13 ♕g3 ♕xg3 14 hxg3 ♗e6 15 ♗f4 0-0-0 16 ♗e5 ♗xe5 17 ♘xe5 ♖de8 18 ♘d2 f6 19 ♘d3 ♗f5 = MacPhail-Semakoff, Teesside 1973.

c) 11 b3 h6 12 ♕e3 (12 ♕g3 ♕d6 13 ♘c3 ♗e6 14 ♗b2 ♕xg3 15 hxg3 0-0-0 ∓ Egiazarian-Tkachev, Ohrid Ech 2001) 12...♗e6 13 ♗a3 ♘d5 14 ♕e2 (14 ♗xb4? ♘xe3 15 ♖xe3 ♗xa1 16 c3 a5 17 ♗c5 a4 −+ Solomon-Wallace, Penrith 2003) 14...♕g4 15 ♘e5 ♕xe2 16 ♖xe2 0-0-0 ∓ Nunn-Bronstein, Hastings 1975/6.

9...f5 10 e5 *(D)*

White hangs on to the pawn while keeping the central files closed. Still, it's slightly surprising that the only alternative to this move that has been tested in practice is the blunder 10 b3?. That being said, there are not so many ways for White to reorganize his position, and lines like 10 exf5 ♗xf5 11 ♖e1 ♗f6 12 ♕e3 0-0-0 and 10 ♘c3 fxe4 11 ♖e1 ♗f6 12 ♖xe4 ♕d6 13 ♕e3 0-0 seem to give Black ample compensation for his pawn.

B



Whatever the correct assessment of this messy position may be, it seems very unlikely that this was what White was hoping for when he took on c6!

10...♕g4

At first this offer to exchange queens appeared counter-intuitive to us. A closer inspection reveals that this is a kind of a tempo-win against White's exposed queen, as 11 ♕xg4 fxg4 is very comfortable for Black. His bishop will arrive on f5, when White's e-pawn has to fall.

However, we are not sure that this is better than 10...c5!? 11 b3, when Black has these options:

a) 11...♕xa1? 12 ♘c3 ±.

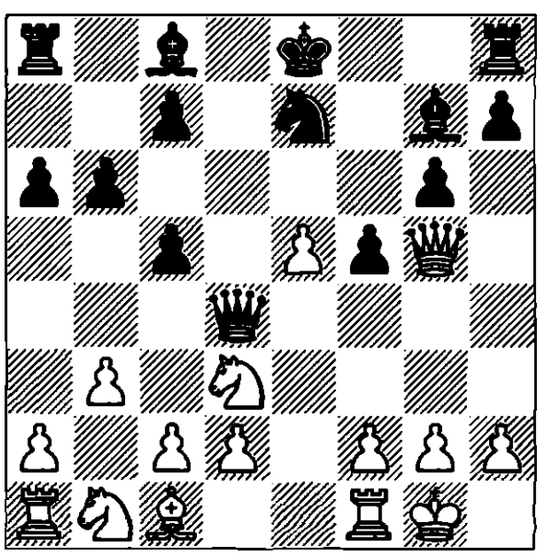
b) 11...h6 needs further testing:

b1) 12 ♕g3 f4 13 ♕f3 ♗f5 14 ♕xb7? (14 ♗b2) 14...♗e4 15 ♕xc7 ♗xd3 16 cxd3 ♗xe5 is winning for Black, Timman-Short, El Escorial Ct (9) 1993.

b2) 12 ♕e3 f4!? 13 ♕f3 (13 ♕xd4 cxd4 14 ♘xf4 ♗xe5 15 d3 ♔f7 16 ♖e1 ♘c6 17 ♘e2 ♗f5 = Zenker-Rost, corr. 2001) 13...♕d5 14 ♕xf4 ♖f8 15 ♕g3 ♗f5 16 ♗b2 ♗xd3 17 cxd3 0-0-0 ±.

c) 11...b6 *(D)* has been tested at top level with very good results for Black:

W



c1) 12 ♘c3 still seems to be the main challenge. In Fressinet-Bacrot, French Ch (Besançon) rpd 1999 Black won after 12...♗b7 13 ♗b2 ♕g4 14 ♕xg4 fxg4 15 ♖fe1 0-0-0 but we are not convinced that Black has full compensation for the pawn after 16 ♘e4. We are awaiting new developments in this line.

c2) 12 ♗b2 is better explored, with play usually continuing 12...♕g4 13 ♕e3 (now after 13 ♕xg4 fxg4, unlike the Bacrot game above, the black bishop will come to f5 with an excellent game for Black) 13...♘d5 14 ♕e1 ♗b7 15 f3 ♕g5 16 ♘c3. At this point Kindermann-P.Nikolić, Bundesliga 2003/4 was agreed drawn. In Radjabov-Kazhgaleev, Khanty-Mansiisk 2005, the players decided to fight it out, and after 16...0-0-0 17 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 18 ♕e2 f4 19 b4 (not a great idea) 19...c4 20 ♘f2 ♖he8 21 ♖fe1 ♕e7, Black had a very promising initiative on the kingside connected with the ...g4 break and

won in very instructive fashion: 22 a3 ♔b8 23 d3 cxd3 24 cxd3 g5 25 d4 h5! 26 ♕xa6 g4 27 ♕e2 ♗f6 28 ♘e4 ♗h4 29 ♖f1 ♖g8 30 ♔h1 ♖df8 31 ♘d2 ♗g3! 32 ♖fc1 ♕h4 0-1.

11 ♕e3

Black has had no problems after 11 f4 ♕xg5 12 fxg5:

a) 12...b6 13 ♖e1 c5 14 ♘c3 ♗e6 15 ♘e2 (or 15 ♘f4 ♔f7 followed by ...♘c6) 15...♘c6 16 b3 ½-½ Naiditsch-Ibragimov, Pulvermühle 2000.

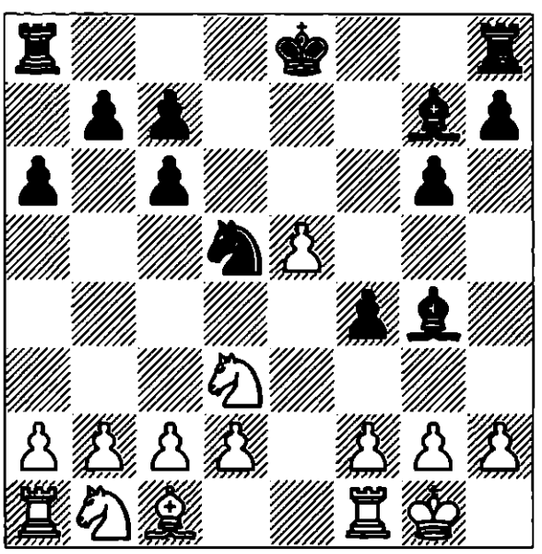
b) 12...h6 13 gxh6 ♖xh6 14 ♘c3 g5 15 ♖e1 ♔f7 16 ♘f2 ♗e6 17 d4 ♔g6 18 ♘e2 and a draw was agreed in Illescas-Ivanchuk, Dos Hermanas 1996.

11...♘d5 12 ♕g3

Or 12 ♕e1 b6 13 ♘c3 ♗b7 14 f3 ♕d4+ 15 ♕f2 ½-½ Zhang Zhong-Ganguly, Jodhpur 2003. We assume Black would have played 15...c5 but would have liked to see the game played out to its natural conclusion.

12...f4 13 ♕xg4 ♗xg4 *(D)*

W



14 ♘c3 f3

14...0-0 and 14...0-0-0 15 ♘xd5 cxd5 also give Black reasonable compensation.

15 ♘xd5 cxd5

Black's more active pieces and bishop-pair provide him with sufficient compensation for the pawn.

Conclusion:

It is not at all clear that Black gets enough for his pawn in all lines, but it seems quite unlikely that this is the kind of position White was looking forward to when he captured on c6 on his fourth move.

Illustrative Game 30

Vysochin – Varavin

Tula 2001

16 ♘f4 d4

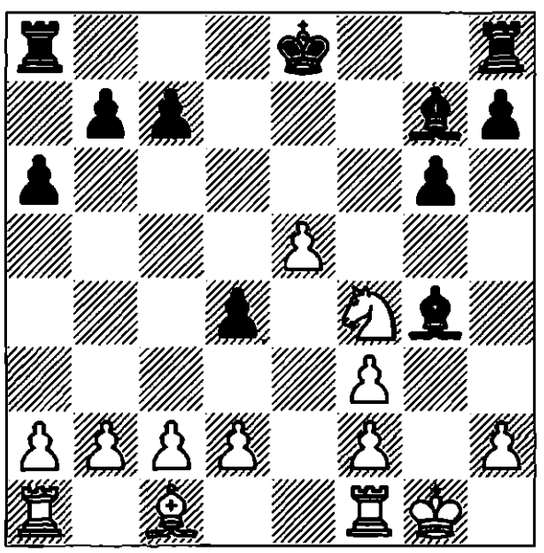
16...♗xe5 may be a more direct path to equality; e.g., 17 ♖e1 0-0 and now:

a) 18 ♖xe5 ♖xf4 19 h3 (19 ♖xd5 fxg2 =) 19...♗d7 =.

b) 18 ♘xd5 ♖ae8 19 ♘e3 ♗e6 with compensation as White has no natural way to complete his development.

17 gxf3 *(D)*

B



17...♗d7?

This isn't a good attempt to keep the initiative. 17...♗f5! was the obvious choice; e.g., 18 d3 0-0-0 with compensation.

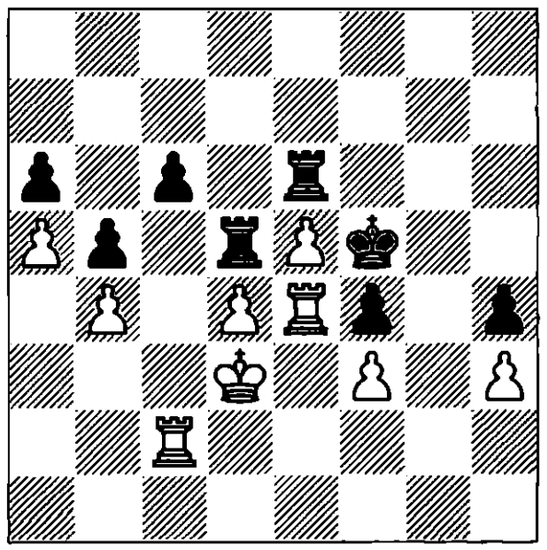
18 ♘g2 ♖f8 19 f4 d3 20 cxd3 ♗c6

After 20...0-0-0 Black still has hopes of saving the game as he will pick up a pawn or two before White is able to complete his development.

21 b3 ♖f5 22 d4 ♖d8 23 ♗b2 ♗h6 24 ♘e3 ♖xf4 25 d5 ♗xd5 26 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 27 d4 ♖g4+ 28 ♔h1 ♗f4 29 h3

White is a pawn up but Black is active and White's pawns are relatively immobile. Nothing is decided yet, but the further development of the game seems natural enough, so we believe White is winning.

29...♖g5 30 ♖ae1 ♔e7 31 ♖e4 ♖f5 32 ♔g2 ♔e6 33 ♗c1 g5 34 b4 ♖d7 35 ♗b2 c6 36 f3 h5 37 ♔f2 ♖d5 38 ♗c3 ♖f8 39 ♔e2 h4 40 a4 b6 41 ♖b1 ♖fd8 42 ♖b2 ♔f5 43 a5 b5 44 ♖c2 ♖e8 45 ♗d2 ♖e6 46 ♗xf4 gxf4 47 ♔d3 *(D)*



Finally it's obvious that Black has failed to blockade White's pawns. He cannot prevent White from either penetrating via the g-file or advancing his e-pawn.

47...♖g6 48 e6 ♖xe6 49 ♖xe6 ♔xe6 50 ♖xc6+ ♔d7 51 ♖xa6 ♖g5 52 ♔e4 ♖g3 53 ♔xf4 ♖xh3 54 ♖b6 ♖h1 55 ♖xb5 h3 56 ♖h5 h2 57 b5 ♔d6 58 a6 ♖a1 59 a7 1-0

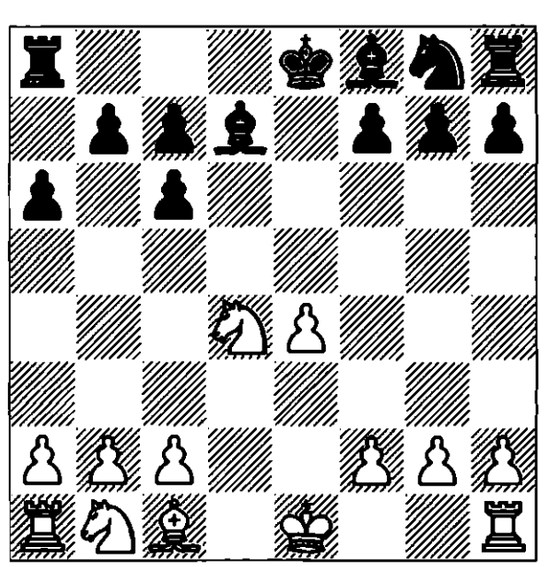
8E: Exchange Variation, 5 d4

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6)

5 d4

This was White's first try in the Exchange Variation, and as it leads to a more or less forced exchange of queens, it indeed is a natural try. However, although White comes a step closer to his desired endgame, the line is fairly harmless as Black has no problems developing harmoniously and making his bishop-pair count.

5...exd4 6 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 7 ♘xd4 ♗d7 *(D)*



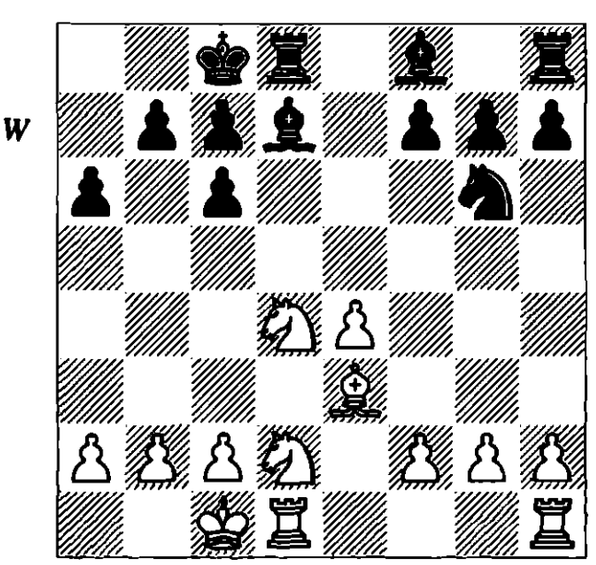
The essential difference between the Fischer Variation (5 0-0 f6 6 d4, etc.) and this position is that White hasn't castled kingside. Unless White can demonstrate that there is an advantage to this (e.g. by castling queenside or keeping the king in the centre, claiming that the king is an active piece in the endgame), 5 d4 is simply a poor relative of the more popular exchange variations. The reason for this is that Black has managed without the slightly weakening ...f6 here. In the Fischer Variation there was a genuine threat to the e5-pawn and defending it caused some discomfort in Black's camp. However, here White has decided to liquidate the central pawns immediately, giving Black easier play. He can, for example, consider developing his knight to f6, or playing ...f5 in one go.

8 ♘c3

It's hard to compete with this move in the flexibility department. The following alternatives all appear playable but fail to stop Black activating his bishop-pair:

a) 8 0-0?! cannot be too bad but completely fails to make sense of White's choice of variation: 8...0-0-0 9 ♗e3 ♗d6 10 ♘c3 ♘f6 (the more circumspect 10...♘e7 looks more like a present-day move, but who are we to criticize the great Cuban?!) 11 f3 ♖he8 12 ♖fe1 ♗b4 13 ♘b3 ♗xc3 14 bxc3 b6 15 ♖ad1 c5 = Fox-Capablanca, New York 1916.

b) 8 ♗e3 0-0-0 9 ♘d2 ♘e7 10 0-0-0 has a more sophisticated look, but after 10...♘g6 *(D)* Black equalizes by rather simple means:



b1) 11 ♘4b3 ♗d6 12 ♘c4 ♗e6 13 ♘xd6+ cxd6 14 ♘d4 ♖he8 15 ♘xe6 ♖xe6 16 f3 ♘e5 17 ♗d4 f6 with a rock-solid position for Black, Pecorelli Garcia-Huerta, Cienfuegos 1985.

b2) 11 h3 ♖e8 12 ♖he1 ♗d6 13 ♘e2 ♘h4! 14 ♖g1 f5 15 ♘c4 ♗f8 16 exf5 b5 ∓ Richman-Fischer, Poughskeepie 1963.

b3) 11 f3 ♗e7 12 ♖he1 ♗f6 (= *NCO*) 13 ♘e2 h5 14 ♗d4 ♗xd4 15 ♘xd4 c5 16 ♘4b3 b6, Piazzini-Espinosa Flores, Buenos Aires 1959. Black is comfortable.

c) 8 ♗f4 0-0-0 is also easy to play for Black:

c1) 9 ♘c3 ♗b4 10 ♘de2 ♘e7 11 a3 ♗c5 12 ♗g3 ♘g6 13 f4 f5 14 e5 ♖he8 15 ♗f2 ♗f8 16 h4 h5 17 ♗e3 ♗e7 18 g3 c5 19 ♔f2 ♗c6 20 ♖hd1 ♘f8! 21 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 22 ♔e1 ♘e6 and Black had gained the initiative in Neulinger-Timoshchenko, Feffernitz 2004. White's majority is firmly blockaded – first and foremost by the splendid knight on e6 – and Black is about to set his own pawns in motion.

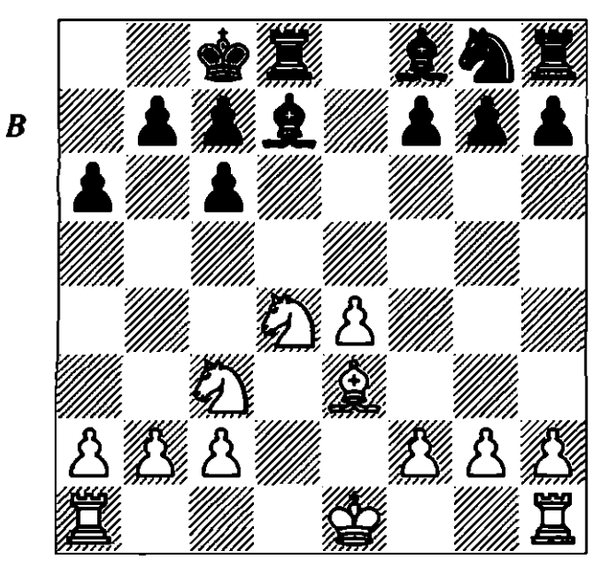
c2) 9 ♘d2 c5 10 ♘4f3 f6 11 0-0-0 ♘e7 12 ♖he1 ♘c6 13 e5!? ♗e7 14 ♘e4 ♗g4 15 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 16 exf6 gxf6 17 ♘ed2 ♖g8 = Kröll-Bachmayr, Austria 2000.

8...0-0-0 9 ♗e3 *(D)*

Strong players have tested alternatives but without achieving much:

a) 9 ♗d2 ♘e7 10 ♘f3 ♘g6 11 0-0-0 ½-½ Inkiov-Velikov, Bois Colombes 1999.

b) 9 f3 ♖e8 10 ♔f2 c5 11 ♘de2 f5 12 ♘g3 fxe4 13 ♘cxe4 ♗e7 = Ljubojević-P.Nikolić, Barcelona 1989.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9...♗b4

9...g6!? is an interesting alternative development scheme: 10 0-0-0 ♗g7 11 ♘de2 ♘e7, and now:

a) 12 f3 ♖he8 13 ♗f2 b6 14 ♖he1 c5 15 ♘d5 ♘xd5 16 ♖xd5 ♗e6 17 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 ∓ Bienstock-Capablanca, Paris (casual game) 1919.

b) 12 ♗d4 f6! (instructive – the exchange of bishops would have made things easier for White) 13 ♔b1 b6 14 f3 c5 = Slobodjan-Yusupov, Altenkirchen 2001.

10 ♘de2 ♘e7

Another promising line is 10...f5 11 0-0-0 ♘f6 12 exf5 ♗xf5 13 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8, and now:

a) 14 ♖d1 ♖e8 15 ♗d4 ♗d6 16 h3 ♗d7 17 ♘g3 b6 18 a3 a5 19 ♔b1 ♖e6 20 ♘f5 ♗f8 21 g4 g6 22 ♘g3 c5 = Kr.Georgiev-Mainka, Ano Liosia 1993.

b) 14 a3 ♗xc3 15 ♘xc3 ♘d5 ½-½ Smyslov-Ivanchuk, Tilburg 1994.

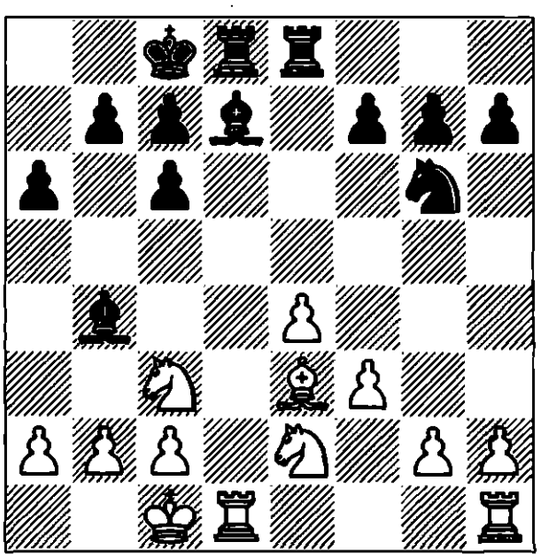
11 0-0-0 ♘g6

Black doesn't have to follow a narrow path in order to equalize: 11...♖he8 12 a3 ♗d6 13 ♖xd6 cxd6 14 ♗b6 f6 15 ♖d1 ½-½ T.Horvath-Groszpeter, Berlin 1997.

12 f3

White must be careful to keep his position compact: 12 f4 ♗d6 13 ♔b1 ♗g4 14 f5 ♘e5 15 ♖he1 ♘c4 16 ♗d4 ♗xh2 17 ♗xg7 ♖xd1+ 18 ♖xd1 ♖g8 19 ♗f6 ♗xe2 20 ♘xe2 ♘d6 ∓ Martinez Gomez-Marcotulli, corr. 2000.

12...♖he8 *(D)*


W

13 h4 h6 14 g4 ♗f8 15 h5 ♘e5 16 ♖df1 ♘c4 17 ♗f2 ♗d6 18 ♗d4 f6 19 ♖d1 c5 20 ♗f2 ♘e5

White's pawn-structure has become inflexible and if anybody is better it must be Black.

Conclusion:

The immediate 5 d4 is not very popular these days. After 7...♗d7 followed by ...0-0-0, Black is very comfortable and can chose between several tempting development schemes.

It doesn't seem that White achieves anything by castling queenside or by keeping his king in the centre. Consequently Black enjoys his normal advantages from his bishop-pair but doesn't have to struggle to catch up in development.

Illustrative Game 31

Buljovčić – Micić
Subotica 2003

21 ♖h3 ♔b8 22 ♗e3 ♗c8 23 ♗f4 c4 24 ♗xe5 fxe5

24...♗xe5 looks stronger, when the bishop dominates in the centre, as after the text-move the white knight installs itself on f5, where it is pretty much unassailable.

25 ♘g3 ♗e7 26 ♖hh1 ♗g5+ 27 ♔b1 ♖xd1+?!

There is no good reason to hand the open file to White.

28 ♖xd1 g6?!

Black is taking excessive risks in order to open the position for his bishop.

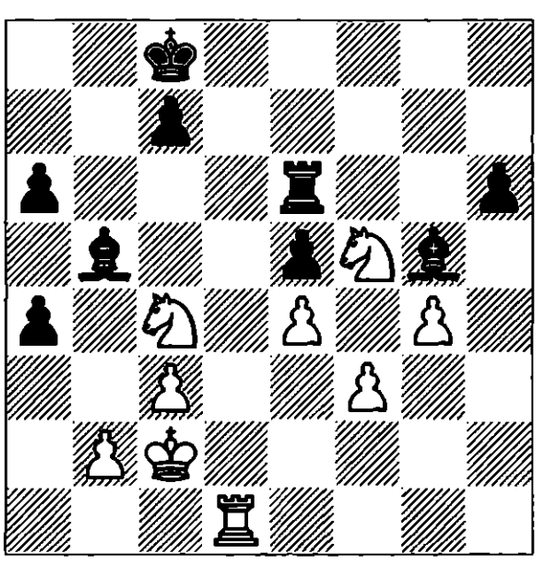
29 hxg6 ♖g8 30 ♘f5 ♖xg6 31 ♘d5 ♖e6 32 c3 ♖e8 33 ♖h1 ♖e6 34 ♔c2 b5 35 ♖d1 ♔b7 36 a4 bxa4?!

After 36...c6 Black is still quite safe, but he seems to have noticed a tempting but faulty idea.

37 ♘de3 ♖b6 38 ♘xc4 ♗e6 39 ♘a5+?!

White may still have an edge after this, but the forcing line 39 ♘xb6 ♗b3+ 40 ♔d3 ♗xd1 41 ♘c4 ♗f4 42 ♘d2 ♔c6 43 ♘e3 is a lot clearer.

39...♔c8 40 ♖a1 ♗d7 41 ♘c4 ♖e6 42 ♖d1 ♗b5 *(D)*



W

43 ♘a3?

A terrible move, after which White's entire kingside construction collapses like a house of cards. After 43 ♘d2 or 43 b3!? White is slightly better.

43...♗e2 44 ♖g1 ♗xf3 45 ♔d3 ♖e8 0-1

8F: Exchange Variation, Rare 5th Moves

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6)

Here we shall examine quite a diverse collection of lines where White delays castling. Nevertheless, they have at least one common trait: Black should protect his e-pawn before he plays ...♗g4, as he can never meet h3 with ...h5 before White castles (giving up his light-squared bishop with ...♗xf3 is obviously undesirable as it is Black's only compensation for his crippled queenside pawn-structure).

5 ♘c3

This flexible move keeps open the option of playing d4 in one move. None of the more minor alternatives have gained any widespread popularity:

a) After 5 ♘xe5 ♕d4 6 ♘f3 ♕xe4+ 7 ♕e2 ♕xe2+ 8 ♔xe2 Black is actually slightly better, as in this case White has no pawn-majority to compensate for Black's bishop-pair.

b) 5 b3 is an attempt to keep the play closed along the lines of the Steenwijker Variation. White gains a tempo, but Black's pieces are easier to coordinate: 5...f6 6 ♗b2 ♗g4 7 h3 ♗h5 8 d3 c5 9 ♘bd2 ♘e7 10 ♘f1 ♘c6 11 ♘g3 ♗f7 12 0-0 ♕d7 13 ♕d2 0-0-0 ∓ Tate-Golod, Las Vegas 2002.

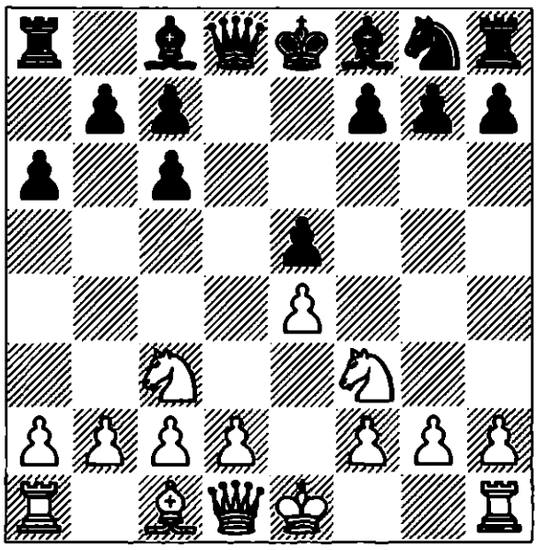
c) 5 d3 is another closed line, but after 5...f6 Black has all the time he needs to make his bishop-pair count. Usually he plays ...c5 early on so that White will never be able to create a kingside majority:

c1) 6 ♘bd2 ♗d6 7 ♘f1 ♘e7 8 ♘g3 h5 9 h3 c5 10 ♗e3 ♗e6 11 ♘h4 g6 12 ♕f3 ♖f8 13 ♕e2 ♕d7 14 ♘f3 0-0-0 ∓ Labutin-Varavin, Kstovo 1997.

c2) 6 ♗e3 ♘e7 7 ♘c3 ♘g6 8 ♘e2 ♗g4 9 ♘d2 ♗d6 10 f3 ♗e6 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♔h1 c5 13 ♕e1 b5 14 b3 ♕e7 = Potapov-Leonidov, Ozery 1997.

c3) 6 0-0 ♗g4 7 ♘bd2 ♕d7 8 ♘c4 ♘e7 9 ♘e3 ♗e6 10 ♗d2 c5 11 ♗c3 ♘c6 12 ♘d2 b5 13 b3 ♗d6 14 ♗b2 0-0 15 c4? ♘d4 ∓ Ovechkin-Kazhgaleev, Pardubice 1996.

We now return to 5 ♘c3 *(D)*:


B

5...f6

This is the practical way to protect the e-pawn, as it will lead to positions similar to those arising from *5 0-0 f6*. There even are some minor transpositions.

6 d4

For 6 0-0, see *5 0-0 f6 6 ♘c3*. Other moves lead to quiet play similar to some of the alternatives on White's 5th move, but in these lines the knight usually heads for c4 rather than c3.

6...exd4 7 ♘xd4

After 7 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 8 ♘xd4 ♗d7 the basic play is now familiar: White's better pawn-structure roughly compensates for Black's bishop-pair in an open position. Then:

a) 9 ♗e3 ♗b4 10 ♘de2 ♘e7 11 0-0-0 ♘g6 12 a3 ♗d6 13 f3 h5 14 h4 ♘e5 15 ♘a4 ♖d8 16 ♔b1 ♗c8 17 ♔a2 0-0 18 b3 f5 19 ♘ac3 ♘g6 = Blocker-Ibragimov, King's Island 2001.

b) 9 ♗f4 0-0-0 10 0-0-0 ♘e7 11 ♗g3 ♘g6 and White has tried:

b1) 12 ♘de2 ♖e8 13 f3 c5 ½-½ Veingold-Nei, Tallinn 1979.

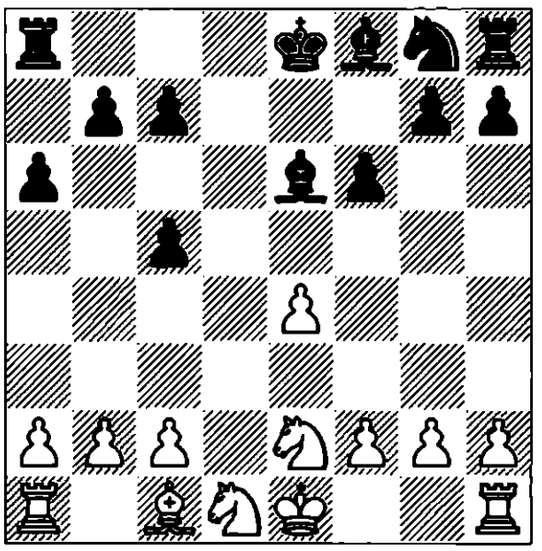
b2) 12 f3 ♗b4 13 ♘ce2 (13 ♘de2 ♖he8 14 ♘f4 ♘xf4 15 ♗xf4 ♗xc3 16 bxc3 ♗e6 17 a3 ½-½ Plachetka-Hazai, Sofia 1979) 13...♖he8 14 h4 ♗f8 15 h5 ♘e5 16 ♘f4 ♘f7 17 ♗f2 ♗d6 18 ♘d3 c5 19 ♘e2 f5 20 ♘c3 c4 = Ljubojević-Hübner, Novi Sad OL 1990.

7...c5 8 ♘de2 ♕xd1+ 9 ♘xd1 ♗e6 *(D)*

10 ♗f4

It seems natural to develop this bishop before the knight goes to e3.

10 ♘e3 0-0-0 11 b3 ♘e7 12 ♗b2 ♘c6 13 c4 ♘b4 14 ♘f4 ♗f7 15 ♔e2 ♗d6 16 ♘fd5 ♘xd5


W

17 cxd5 ♖he8 18 f3 ♗f4 19 ♗c1 ♗xe3 20 ♗xe3 f5 ∓ Sorokin-Ibragimov, Kherson 1991.

10...0-0-0 11 ♘e3

Or 11 ♗g3 ♘e7 12 ♘e3 g6 13 0-0 ½-½ Šolak-Fontaine, Portorož 2004.

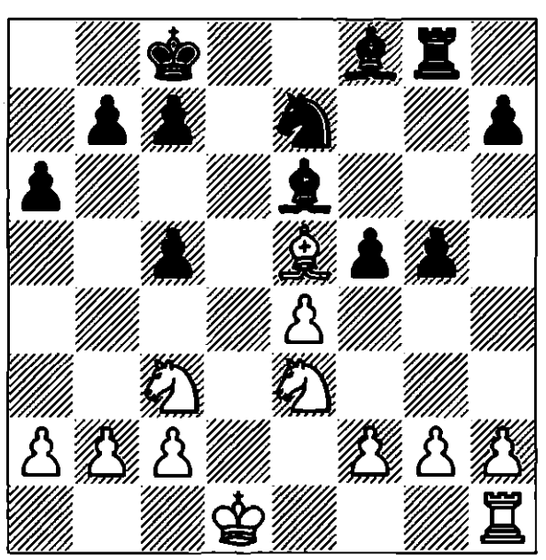
11...♘e7 12 ♖d1

12 h4 ♘c6 13 0-0 c4 14 ♘c3 ♗c5 15 ♖ad1 ♘d4 16 ♔h1 c6 17 ♖fe1 b5 18 ♘b1 ♗f7 19 ♗g3 ♗g6 is slightly better for Black, Yanev-Korneev, Salou 2000.

12...♖xd1+ 13 ♔xd1 g5 14 ♗g3 f5 15 ♗e5

15 exf5 ♘xf5 16 ♘xf5 ♗xf5 17 ♗e5 ♖g8 18 ♖e1 ♗h6 19 f3 g4 20 f4 ♖d8+ ∓ Yandemirov-A.Kuzmin, USSR Cht (Podolsk) 1990.

15...♖g8 16 ♘c3 *(D)*


B

16...g4

16...c6!?, appears playable too; e.g., 17 ♘a4 f4 18 ♘xc5 ♗xa2.

17 ♘cd5 ♗xd5 18 ♘xd5 fxe4 19 ♘xe7+ ♗xe7 20 ♔e2 ♗g5 21 h3 ♖d8 22 ♗c3

22 hxg4 ♖d2+ 23 ♔e1 ♖xc2 ½-½ Yandemirov-Ibragimov, Elista 1997.

22...gxh3 23 ♖xh3 h6

Black is a pawn up and reasonably active.

Conclusion:

As in the previous lines, Black's bishop-pair compensates for his slightly compromised pawn-structure.

Illustrative Game 32

Yandemirov – An. Bykhovsky
Ubeda 1999

24 ♖g3 b5

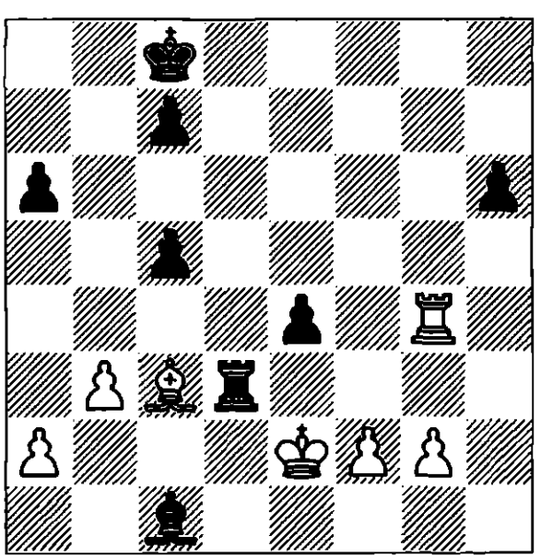
Quite possibly Black should clear the 5th rank in order to activate his rook: 24...c4 25 ♖g4 ♖e8 26 ♗d2 ♗xd2 27 ♔xd2 ♖e5 28 ♖h4 h5 29 ♔e3 ♖a5 30 a3 ♖b5 (or 30...c3!? 31 b3 ♖d5 with the idea ...♖d2) with sufficient counterplay.

25 ♖g4 b4 26 ♗e1 ♗c1

It's hard to believe that 26...♖e8 can be anything but a draw.

27 b3 ♖d4 28 c3 bxc3 29 ♗xc3 ♖d3 *(D)*

W



For the moment Black is a pawn up but his pawn-structure is so fragmented that he cannot even be sure of maintaining the material balance.

30 ♗a5 ♖d4 31 ♖g8+ ♔b7 32 ♖g7 ♔c6 33 ♖xc7+ ♔b5

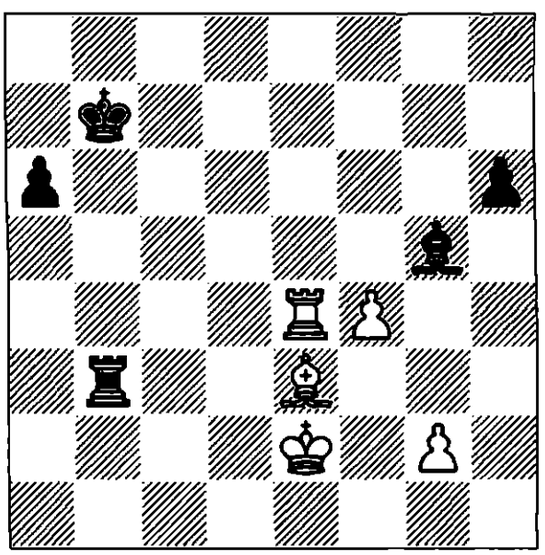
It seems likely that Black can hold this position by accurate play, but it will be an uphill struggle as his pawns are permanently weak.

34 ♗c3

34 a4+ ♔xa5 35 ♖xc5+ ♔b4 36 ♖xc1 ♔xb3 only brings the draw closer.

34...♖d3 35 ♗e1 ♗g5 36 ♖c8 ♖d4 37 ♖e8 ♔b6 38 ♖c8 ♖d5 39 ♖b8+ ♔a7 40 ♖e8 ♖d4 41 ♗c3 ♖d3 42 ♗a5 ♖d4 43 ♖e6 ♔b7 44 ♖b6+ ♔a7 45 ♖c6 ♖d5 46 ♖e6 c4 47 ♗b6+ ♔b7 48 ♗e3 cxb3 49 axb3 ♖b5 50 ♖xe4 ♖xb3 51 f4 *(D)*

B



White's f-pawn is more dangerous than Black's a-pawn, but still we wouldn't dare to attempt an evaluation of this complicated endgame.

51...♗d8 52 f5 h5 53 ♗d4 ♖b4 54 ♔d3 ♖b3+ 55 ♔e2 ♗b6?

This leads to a lost rook endgame. Black had to try 55...♖b4 again and hope for the best.

56 ♖e7+ ♔c8 57 ♖e8+ ♔c7

Not 57...♔d7? 58 ♖b8 +–.

58 ♖e7+ ♔c8 59 ♗xb6 ♖xb6 60 ♔f3 ♔d8 61 ♖h7 a5 62 ♔f4 ♔e8

Unfortunately, there is no time to get Black's rook behind his own passed pawn as 62...♖a6 63 ♔g5 a4 64 f6 is hopeless for him.

63 ♔g5 ♖b2 64 g3 ♖b3 65 ♔h4 a4 66 ♖xh5 a3 67 ♖h8+ ♔f7 68 ♖a8 ♔f6 69 g4 ♖c3 70 ♖a6+ ♔f7 71 ♔g5 1-0

9 Delayed Exchange Variations

Here we shall examine two related systems. Flohr's 5 ♗xc6 has never been very popular, while the Steenwijker is occasionally tested by some of the world's top players and can be quite an effective weapon against weaker opponents as it leads to slow but rather complicated middlegames.

Chapter Guide

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 (5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♗xc6 dxc6 7 d3 ♘d7)

Line 9A: 5 ♗xc6 194
Line 9B: 8 ♘bd2 196
Line 9C: (8 b3) 199
Line 9D: (7 ♘c3) 201

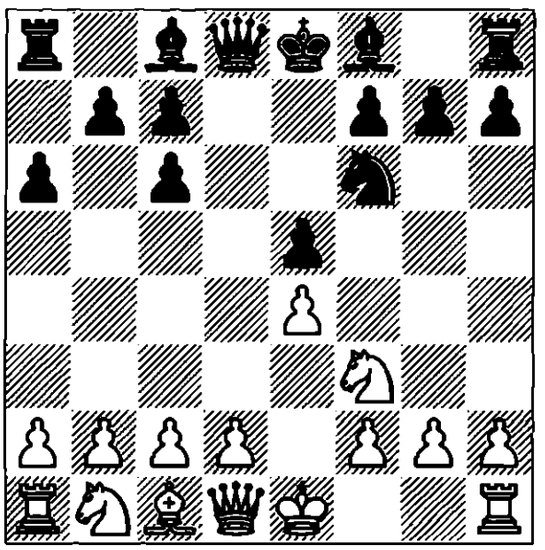
9A: Flohr's Exchange, 5 ♗xc6

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6)

5 ♗xc6

This was Flohr's attempt to improve on the Exchange Variation. White loses a tempo, but hopes to demonstrate that the f6-knight is misplaced. This logic seems a bit too artificial but demonstrating it takes some accuracy. The system's greatest practical advantage over the 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♗xc6 version is that it avoids the Open Ruy Lopez initiated by 5...♘xe4 and therefore reduces the amount of preparation required for White.

5...dxc6 *(D)*



There is no more reason to retake with the b-pawn here than when the exchange occurred on the previous move.

6 d3

It is logical for White to try to delay castling for a while, possibly generating threats to e5 more rapidly.

a) 6 ♘xe5? ♕d4 7 ♘f3 ♕xe4+ 8 ♕e2 ♕xe2+ 9 ♔xe2 ♗f5 10 d3 ♗d6 is by now a familiar kind of position. White has no pawn-majority to compensate for Black's bishop-pair; Black is already slightly better.

b) 6 ♕e2 ♗d6 7 d4? exd4 8 e5 0-0 0-1 Goncalves-Søgaard, corr. 1999.

c) 6 0-0 ♘d7 7 b3 ♗d6 8 ♗b2 0-0 9 d3 f6 10 ♘bd2 ♘c5 11 ♘h4 g6 12 g3 ♗h3 13 ♘g2 ♘e6 14 ♘c4 c5 resembles the main line. Black was very comfortable in Radulov-P.Velikov, Silkeborg 1983.

d) After 6 ♘c3 ♗d6, White has tried:

d1) 7 d4 ♗b4 8 ♘xe5 ♘xe4 9 0-0 ♗xc3 10 bxc3 0-0 11 ♗a3 ♘d6 12 c4 f6 13 ♘g4 ♖e8 14 ♘e3 ♘f5 15 ♘xf5 ♗xf5 16 ♕d2 ♗e6 ∓ Kurajica-Karpov, Skopje 1976.

d2) 7 d3 ♗e6 (7...c5 is an obvious alternative) 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 g5 10 ♗g3 ♘d7 11 h4 (we presume 11 d4 should be met with 11...♕f6) 11...g4 12 ♘d2 h5 13 ♘c4 ♕e7 14 ♘xd6+ cxd6 and then:

d21) 15 d4 0-0-0 16 d5 cxd5 17 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 18 ♕xd5 ♕e6 19 0-0-0 ♘f6 20 ♕xe6+ fxe6 is fine for Black.

d22) 15 ♕e2 f6 16 0-0-0 c5 17 ♔b1 ♕f7 18 f4 gxf3 19 gxf3 b5 and Black was about to take over the initiative in Atakisi-Skurski, Warsaw Ech 2005.

6...♗d6

Compared to some of the Steenwijker lines in the next sections, this saves Black a tempo as the bishop gets to d6 in one move.

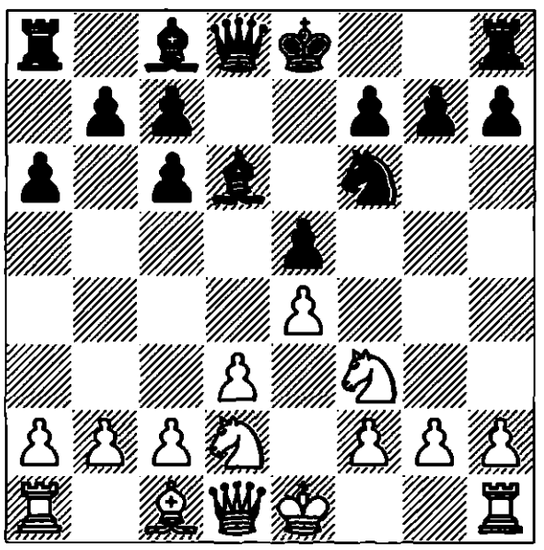
6...♘d7 is mainly a transposition after 7 ♘bd2 ♗d6 8 ♘c4 0-0 (– *6...♗d6 7 ♘bd2 0-0 8 ♘c4 ♘d7*).

7 ♘bd2 *(D)*

White can also try:

a) 7 ♗g5 h6 8 ♗h4 ♗g4 9 h3 ♗h5 10 ♘bd2 ♕e7 11 ♘c4 ♕e6 12 ♘e3 0-0-0 =.

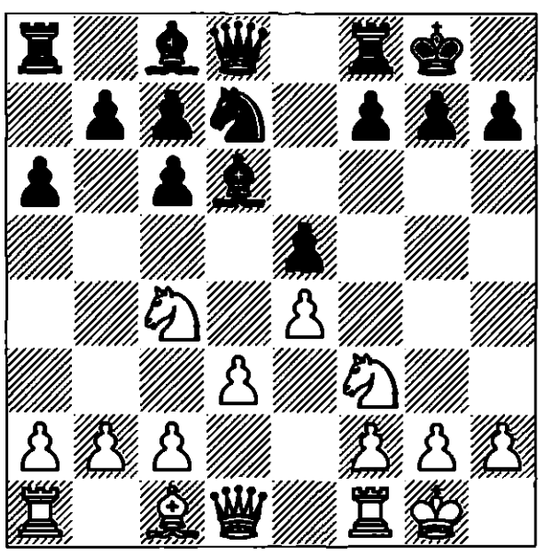
b) 7 b3 ♗e6 8 ♗b2 ♘d7 9 ♘bd2 ♕e7 10 d4 f6 11 ♕e2 0-0-0 12 0-0-0 ♗g4 13 h3 ♗h5 14 ♖he1 exd4 15 g4 d3 16 cxd3 ♗f7 = Dorfman-Mikhalchishin, Tallinn 1988.



7...0-0 8 ♘c4

Or 8 0-0 c5 9 ♘c4 ♘d7 10 a4 ♖e8 11 b3 ♘b8 12 h3 ♘c6 13 ♗e3 f6 14 ♘h4 g6 = Zaichik-Psakhis, Vilnius 1978.

8...♘d7 9 0-0 *(D)*



White has no direct threats, so there is no real point delaying castling any more.

9...♖e8 10 b3 c5 11 ♗b2

White has also tried:

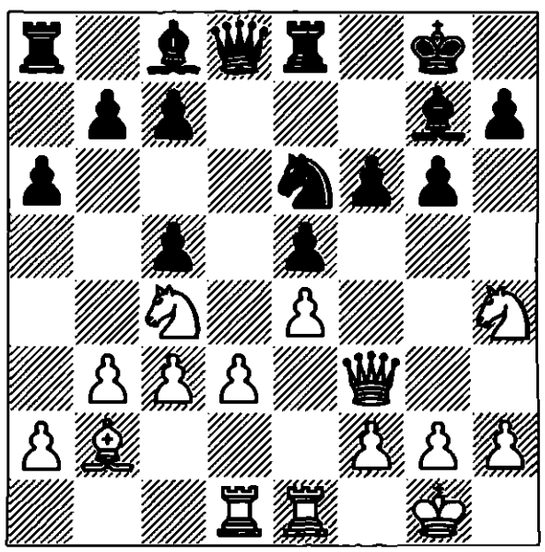
a) 11 h3 ♘f8 12 ♗b2 ♘g6 13 ♔h2 ♕f6 14 ♘g1 ♕e7 15 ♘e2 f5 16 exf5 ♗xf5 17 ♘g3 ♖f8 18 ♕e1 ♗d7 19 ♘e4 ♘f4 20 ♗c1 ♘e6 21 ♗e3 b5 22 ♘cd2 ♖ad8 = Kochetkov-Korneev, Minsk 1995.

b) 11 ♘e1 (aiming for f4, but the knight is poorly placed on e1) 11...b5 12 ♘xd6 cxd6 13 f4 exf4 14 ♗xf4 ♘e5 is roughly equal and apparently led quickly to a draw in Bednarski-Darga, Tel-Aviv OL 1964, though the version of this game in the databases looks suspect.

11...f6 12 c3

Or 12 ♘h4 ♘b8 13 ♘f5 ♘c6 ½-½ Kovacs-Plachetka, Trnava 1979.

12...♘f8 13 ♘h4 ♘e6 14 ♕f3 ♗f8 15 ♖ad1 g6 16 ♖fe1 ♗g7 *(D)*



White is more active, but he is unable to open up the position to exploit his lead in development and better-placed pieces. We believe Black's position has more potential and is slightly preferable.

Conclusion:

Black lags slightly in development right from the opening, but by keeping a grip on the important d4-square, with moves like ...c5 and a knight transfer to either c6 or e6, he prevents White from opening the position early on with d4. Once Black has stabilized the situation and caught up with development, he can start thinking about opening the position again – this time on his own terms – since the bishops normally thrive in open positions.

Illustrative Game 33

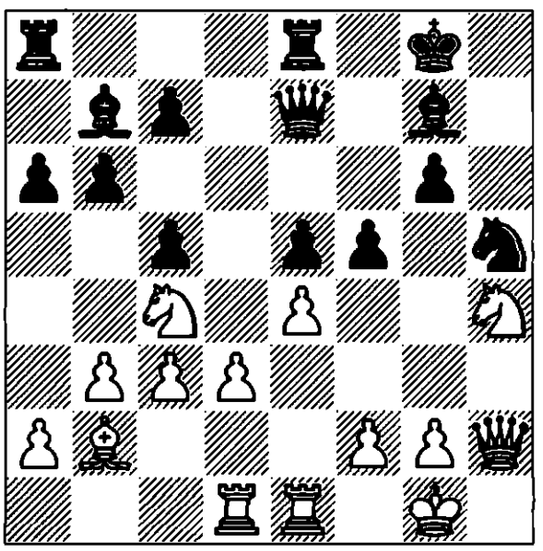
Savić – Abramović
Herceg Novi 2005

17 ♕e3 b6 18 ♘f3 ♗b7 19 h4 ♕e7 20 h5 ♘f4 21 hxg6 hxg6 22 ♘h4 f5 23 ♕g3

23 g3 ♕g5 24 ♔f1 ♕g4 doesn't improve over the game continuation.

23...♘h5 24 ♕h2 *(D)*

B



24...♕g5 25 ♘f3 ♕f4 ½-½

The position is fairly balanced but it would have been natural for Black to play on as his bishop-pair is likely to gain in strength as the game continues.

9B: Steenwijker, 6 ♗xc6

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7)

6 ♗xc6

A refinement of the refinement! This variation has been really unlucky with its naming. Beside our designation, which is as hard to spell as it is to pronounce for most non-Dutch-speaking people, it is also known as the Delayed Exchange Ruy Lopez Deferred (DERLD).

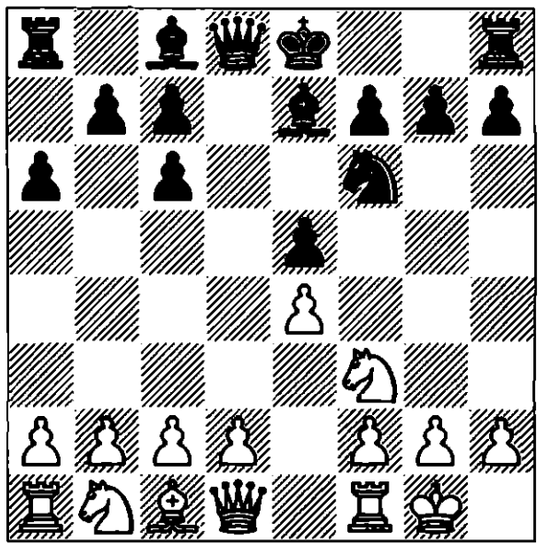
The delayed capture doesn't represent an extra tempo loss (compared to 5 ♗xc6) and succeeds in luring another black piece to a sub-optimal square. However, it comes with a price-tag: White allows Black a few extra options, among them the Open Variation and the Arkhangelsk. None of this, however, is part of our repertoire, so we must either accept the situation and find a way to reorganize our pieces, or go for the move-order *5...b5 6 ♗b3 ♗e7*, which is briefly considered in the 'Ruy Lopez Overview' in the Introduction.

6...dxc6 *(D)*

7 d3

This quiet move is the most natural way to protect the white e-pawn, thus threatening to win the black one. Now ♘bd2-c4, adding pressure

W



on e5, becomes an option. For alternatives see 9D.

7...♘d7

This is the only natural way to protect the e-pawn. Now it can be further protected by ...f6 when Black needs to redeploy the knight.

8 ♘bd2

For alternatives see Line 9C.

8...0-0 *(D)*

After 8...c5 9 ♘c4 (9 a4) 9...♗d6, White has tried:

a) 10 ♗g5 f6 (the bishop move seems pointless as ...f6 is part of Black's plan anyway) 11 ♗d2 0-0 12 ♘h4 ♘b8 13 ♘f5 ♘c6 14 a4 ♗xf5 15 exf5 ♖e8 16 ♘a5 ♕d7 17 ♘xb7 ♖ab8 18 ♘a5 ♘xa5 19 ♗xa5 ♕xf5 = Sutovsky-Adams, French Cht 2004.

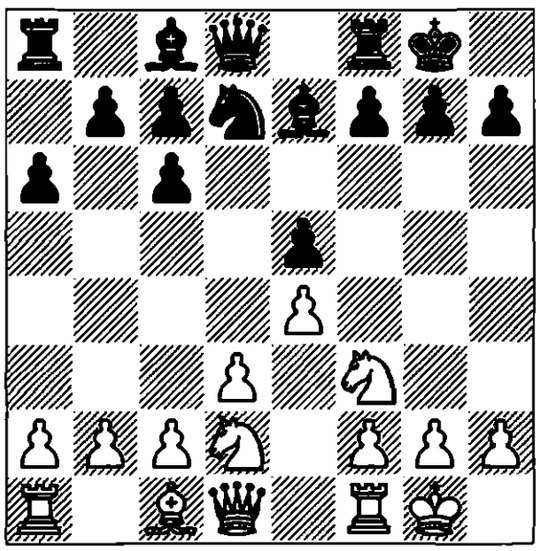
b) 10 a4 b6 11 ♘fd2 0-0 12 ♘xd6 cxd6 13 ♘c4 ♘b8 14 f4 ♘c6 was Shtyrenkov-Stefansson, Cappelle la Grande 1995, but we are doubtful about Black's position after 15 f5 f6; e.g., 16 ♘e3 ♘e7 17 c4 and White's attack looks rather menacing, starting with moves like ♖f3-h3 and ♕h5, and in reserve he has the plan g4-g5.

9 ♘c4

Not only is the knight well placed here, but in case it is driven back, it has an excellent retreat-square at e3 (a5 could sometimes be an option too).

9...f6

With this solid protection of his e-pawn, Black lays the foundation for a simple and effective plan: he wants to play ...c5 to get a grip on d4 and then manoeuvre his knight to that square (or at least to a square one knight-step away). This can be achieved in various ways. In the main line we advocate first ...♘c5-e6 and



only then ...c5. However, ...♘f8-e6 is also a common route for the knight, before castling or after a preliminary ...♖e8. In our opinion, however, the most pleasing route is ...♘b8-c6.

Actually, if you absorb this idea and stop reading this chapter right here, you will not be too badly prepared to defend Black's position.

10 ♘h4

This can be seen as an attempt to exploit Black's slight weakening of his king position by simply bringing some pieces over to the kingside. White is also thinking about organizing the f4 break, which is quite thematic for this pawn-structure.

a) 10 b3 c5 11 ♗b2 ♘b8 12 a4 ♘c6 13 ♘fd2 ♗e6 14 a5 b5 15 axb6 cxb6 16 ♘e3 b5 17 ♔h1 a5 ∓ Ovechkin-Smirnov, Nefteyugansk 2002. Black has the bishop-pair, a perfect pawn-structure and a lot of space on the queenside.

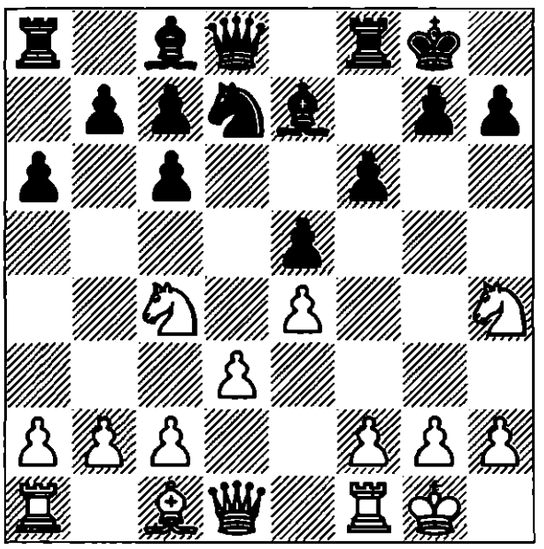
b) 10 ♔h1 ♘c5 11 ♘g1 ♘e6 12 ♘e2 c5 13 ♘e3 ♘d4 14 ♘g3 g6 15 ♘d5 ♗e6 16 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 17 f4 exf4 18 ♗xf4 ♖ad8 and Black had a nice solid position in Drozdov-Ibragimov, Russian Cht (Kazan) 1995.

c) 10 d4 is an attempt to open up the position after Black's slight weakening of his king position. White is also slightly better developed. However, it seems to be premature and Black does rather well after 10...exd4 11 ♘xd4 ♘e5 12 ♘e3 ♖e8:

c1) 13 c3 ♗c5 14 ♔h1 ♕e7 15 ♘ef5 ♕f7 16 ♘g3 ♗d7 17 b3 ♖ad8 18 f4 ♘g6 19 ♕h5 and now a blockading plan *à la* Nimzowitsch: 19...♗xd4! 20 cxd4 f5! ∓ Kritz-Rabiega, Höckendorf 2004.

c2) 13 b3 ♗f8 14 ♗b2 ♘f7 15 f3 ♘d6 16 c4 ♕e7 17 ♕c2 ♗d7 18 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 19 ♕f2 ♕f7 and Black was solid in Ljubojević-Nunn, Linares 1988.

We now return to 10 ♘h4 *(D)*:



10...♘c5!?

This is primarily a route to e6, but unlike b8 or f8, c5 is quite a nice semi-permanent location for the knight.

11 ♘f5

Other moves allow the knight to get to e6 unhindered:

a) 11 ♕f3 ♘e6 12 ♘f5 ♘d4 13 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 14 ♗e3 ♕d8 15 ♕g3 ♗e6 16 ♖ad1 a5 17 f4 exf4 18 ♗xf4 ♕d4+ 19 ♗e3 ♕d7 20 b3 ♖f7 21 h3 a4 with equality, Groszpeter-Psakhis, Minsk 1982.

b) 11 ♗e3 ♘e6 12 ♘f5 ♗c5 13 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 14 ♘g3 ♘e6 15 ♘e2 c5 16 a4 ♘d4 = Torre-Beliavsky, Wijk aan Zee 1984.

c) After 11 f4 exf4 12 ♖xf4 g6 (12...g5!? looks like a draw after 13 ♘f5 gxf4 14 ♕g4+ or 13 ♖g4 ♗xg4 14 ♕xg4 h5! 15 ♕xh5 gxh4) 13 ♗e3 ♘e6, White must show care:

c1) 14 ♖f2? f5 15 ♘f3 f4 16 ♗d2 ♗c5 wins for Black.

c2) 14 ♖g4? ♘g7 15 ♘xg6 ♗xg4 16 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 17 ♕xg4 f5 ∓ Hübner-Smyslov, Palma de Mallorca IZ 1970.

c3) 14 ♖f1 f5 15 ♘f3 f4 16 ♗f2 c5 17 ♕d2 and here both the conventional 17...♘d4 and the more experimental 17...g5!? look very satisfactory for Black.

11...♗xf5

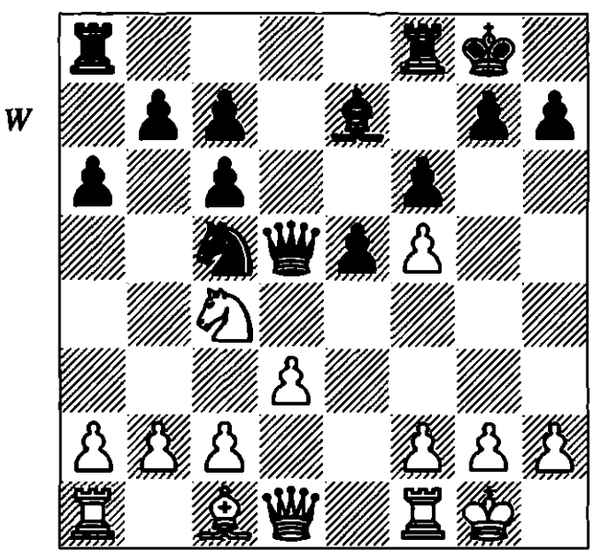
11...♘e6 is also playable, and possibly easier to play if one doesn't fancy the structure in the game; e.g., 12 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 13 b3 ♖d8 14 ♔h1 ♕e8 15 a4 b6 16 f4 exf4 17 ♗xf4 ♘xf4 18

♖xf4 ♗e6 19 ♘e3 b5 20 ♕d2 ♕d7 21 ♖af1 c5 22 ♕f2 c4 = Sarwat-Tissir, Abu Dhabi 2002.

12 exf5 ♕d5 *(D)*

These positions are quite tricky, but control of the e4-square is usually a good omen for Black and the thrust ...e4 is part of his plans. Therefore the queen move to d5 seems the most natural. White, on the other hand, naturally dreams of a blockade on the e4-square followed by a development of his initiative on the kingside, much like the Kasparov-Svidler game seen in Line 9C (note to Black's 10th move).

An alternative is 12...♕d7, which can transpose to the main line after 13 ♕f3 (13 ♕g4 is also possible) 13...♕d5 14 ♕g4.



13 ♕g4

White's main alternative is 13 ♖e1 ♖fe8 14 ♕g4 (14 ♘d2 ♖ad8 15 ♕g4 transposes to the main line) and now:

a) 14...♖ad8 transposes to the main line after 15 ♘d2, and may be Black's best.

b) We would very much like to make 14...e4 work here, but this particular variation seems to be under a cloud after Ivanchuk-Kramnik, Monaco (Amber blindfold) 2002, which went 15 ♘e3 ♕e5 16 ♘f1!? (16 ♘c4 ♕d5 is a draw and was previously played) 16...♗f8 (16...♗d6!? 17 ♘g3 ♖e7 is maybe the best try; e.g., 18 dxe4 ♕d4 with counterplay) 17 ♘g3 ♖ad8 18 h4 ♕d4 19 dxe4 ♕c4 20 ♗e3! with the tactical point 20...♘xe4? 21 b3 ♕xc2 22 ♖ec1 ♕d3 23 ♖d1.

c) 14...♗f8 15 ♘d2 ♖ad8 and now:

c1) 16 h3 ♕f7 17 ♘f3 ♕d5 18 ♘d2 ♕f7 19 b3 ♖d4 20 ♕e2 ♖ed8 (20...g6!?) 21 g3 ♖4d5 22 ♘c4 b6 23 ♗b2 ± Sax-Geller, Moscow IZ 1982.

c2) 16 b4 ♘d7 17 ♘e4 ♕f7 (17...♗xb4 18 ♖e3 ♕f7 19 ♖g3 ♗e7 20 ♕h4 c5 gives Black compensation) 18 ♗d2 c5 19 a3 ♔h8 20 ♖eb1 b5 21 ♕e2 ± Annageldyev-Belosvetov, Alushta 2005. White has managed to secure the blockading square e4 for himself and enjoys a small edge.

13...♖ad8 *(D)*

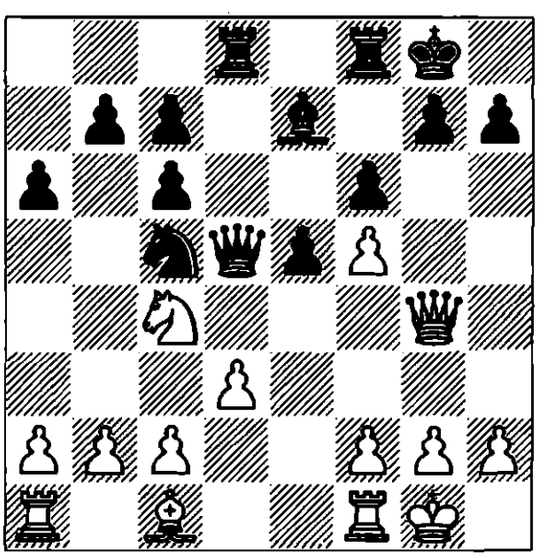
Given that Black is playing for ...e4, it seems natural to place the rooks on d8 and e8. Alternatively Black can try:

a) 13...♖fe8 14 ♖e1 – *13 ♖e1 ♖fe8 14 ♕g4.*

b) 13...e4!? must be checked here as well: 14 ♖e1 ♖f7 (14...♖fe8 transposes to Ivanchuk-Kramnik above), and now:

b1) 15 ♘e3 ♕e5 16 ♘f1 ♗d6 17 dxe4 ♖e8 18 f3 (18 ♘g3 ♕d4) 18...♘a4 19 ♖b1 ♕b5 20 b3 ♘c3 21 ♖a1 ♗e5 and Black definitely had compensation in Gažik-Franzen, Trnava 1984 and later won the game.

b2) 15 b4 ♘a4 16 ♖xe4 ♘c3 and now rather than 17 ♖e6 ♗xb4, which was unclear in Iskov-Norgaard, Tårnby 1983, White can cast doubt on Black's compensation with 17 ♘e3!; e.g., 17...♕d6 18 ♖c4 ♘d5 19 ♗d2, etc.



14 ♖e1 ♖fe8 15 ♘d2

White can also try:

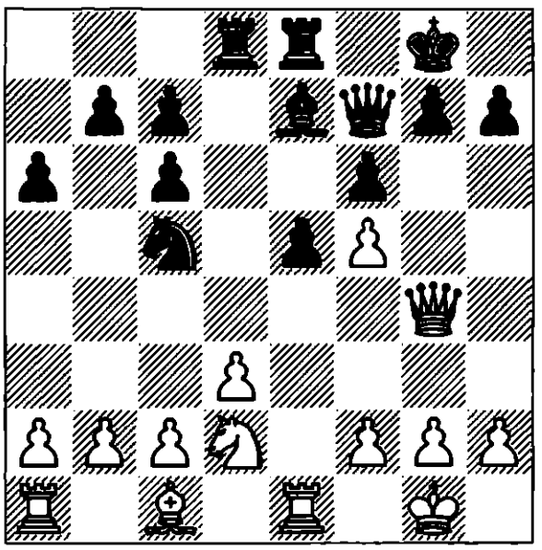
a) 15 a4 ♗f8 16 b3 b5 17 axb5 cxb5 18 ♘e3 ♕d4 and Black's position was already the easier to play in McShane-Bacrot, Biel 2004.

b) 15 ♗d2 ♗f8 leads to equality according to Davies.

15...♕f7! *(D)*

Now ...♖d4, fighting for control over e4, is high on Black's agenda.

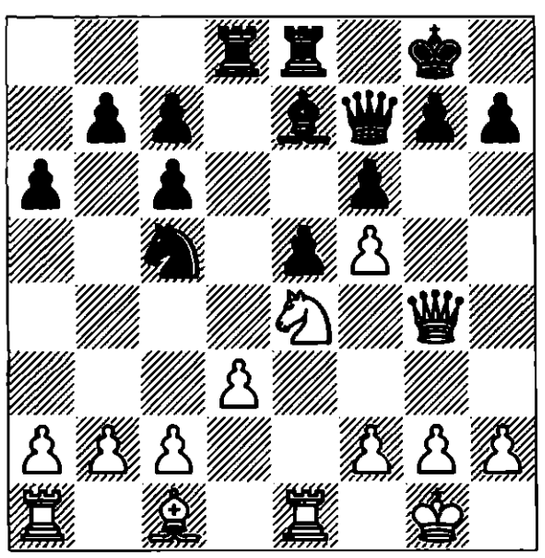
16 b3


W

Or:

a) 16 ♕f3 ♖d4 17 ♘e4 ♘xe4 18 dxe4 ♕c4 19 ♕b3 ♖ed8 20 g3 ♕xb3 21 axb3 c5 22 c3 ♖4d6 23 ♗e3 ♖b6 24 b4 ♖c6 25 bxc5 ♗xc5 26 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 with equality, Papa-Bacrot, Lausanne 2003.

b) 16 ♘e4 *(D)* and now:


B

b1) 16...♗f8 17 ♗d2 ♘xe4 18 ♖xe4 ♖d4 19 b3 (19 ♖xd4 exd4 20 ♕xd4 ♖e2 with counterplay) 19...♖xe4 20 ♕xe4 ♖d8 21 ♗e3 ♕d5 22 f3 ♗c5 ½-½ Mukniashvili-Geller, Gori 1968.

b2) 16...♘xe4 17 ♖xe4 ♖d4 and here:

b21) 18 ♖xd4 exd4 19 ♕xd4? ♗c5! gives Black the initiative.

b22) 18 ♗e3 ♖xe4 19 ♕xe4 (19 dxe4 is worse, because after 19...♕c4 Black puts his finger on White's pawn weaknesses) 19...♖d8 (19...♕d5!?) 20 ♕a4 ♕d5 21 ♖e1 ♕b5 22 ♕xb5 axb5 23 a3 ♔f7 24 ♔f1 c5 25 ♔e2 g6 26 fxg6+ hxg6 and Black clearly had no problems in the game De Wit-Ki.Georgiev, Amsterdam 1985.

16...a5 17 ♗b2 a4 18 ♘f3 ♗d6 19 d4 exd4 20 ♗xd4 axb3 21 axb3 ♖xe1+ 22 ♖xe1 ♘d7 23 h3

½-½ Tal-Dorfman, Lvov 1984.

Conclusion:

The positions arising from this line are quite tricky in character. Black needs to keep an eye on the e4-square. If White can consolidate that square for himself, the future will normally look bright for him and he can slowly prepare an attack on the kingside. The move 15...♕f7! is important, vacating the d4-square for a rook, thus fighting for control of e4.

9C: Steenwijker, 8 b3 and Rare 8th Moves

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖xc6 dxc6 7 d3 ♘d7)

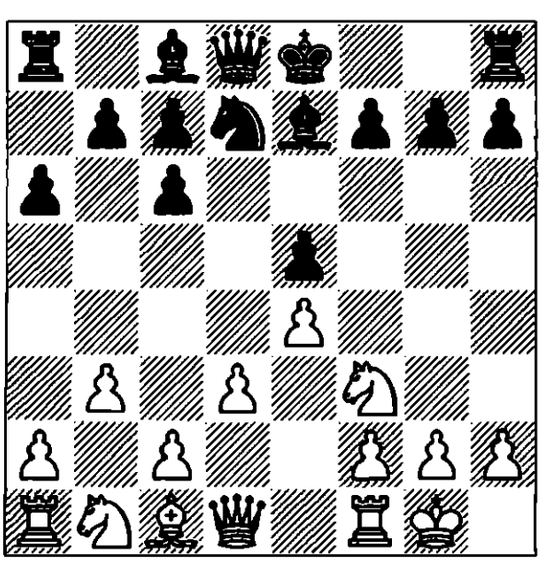
8 b3 *(D)*

Neither this move nor any of the alternatives has much independent value. If they don't transpose directly they are very likely to lead to the same category of positions as those we have already examined after 8 ♘bd2.

8 ♘c3 0-0 9 ♘e2 ♖e8 and then:

a) 10 ♗d2 ♗f8 11 ♗c3 b5 12 h3 c5 13 ♘h2 ♘b6 14 b3 c4 15 dxc4 ♕xd1 16 ♖fxd1 bxc4 17 ♗a5 ♗b7 = Kruppa-Goldin, St Petersburg 1993.

b) 10 h3 a5 11 ♘g3 a4 12 ♘f5 ♗f6 13 ♘h2 ♘f8 14 ♕f3 ♗xf5 15 ♕xf5 ♘e6 16 ♕f3 ♘d4 ∓ Yagupov-Smagin, St Petersburg 1993.


B

8...c5 9 ♗b2 ♗d6 10 ♘bd2

After 10 a4 0-0 11 ♘bd2 ♖e8 12 ♘c4, Black has tried:

a) 12...f6 13 ♘h4 ♘f8 14 ♘f5 ♘e6 15 g3 ♗f8 16 f4 ♘d4 17 a5 ♗xf5 18 exf5 exf4 19

♗xd4 ♕xd4+ ∓ Z.Varga-Timoshenko, Romanian Cht (Timisu de Sus) 1998.

b) 12...b6 13 ♘fd2 ♘f8 14 ♕h5 f6 15 f4 exf4 16 ♘xd6 cxd6 17 ♖xf4 ♘g6 18 ♖f3 ♗e6 and Black had created a barrier of pawns on the dark squares and was very solid in Kramnik-Kariakin, Dortmund 2004.

10...b5!?

This is an attempt to take away the only natural square for the d2-knight.

10...0-0 11 ♘c4 f6 (11...♖e8 12 a4 – *10 a4 0-0 11 ♘bd2 ♖e8 12 ♘c4*) 12 ♘h4 ♘b8 (12...g6 13 f4! with an initiative for White) 13 ♘f5 ♗xf5 14 exf5 ♘c6 15 ♕f3 ♕d7 16 ♕e4 ♔h8 17 ♖fe1 led to a typical edge for White in this line in Kasparov-Svidler, Internet blitz (ICC) 1998, which White won in very instructive fashion: 17...b5 18 ♘e3 ♘d4 19 c3 ♘c6 20 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 21 h4 ♖fe8 22 h5 h6 23 g3 ♘e7 24 g4 c6 25 c4 ♗b8 26 ♘g2 ♕b7 27 ♘h4 ♖d7 28 ♘g6+ ♔g8 29 f4 ♘xg6 30 fxg6 ♖de7 31 f5 ♖d7 32 ♗c3 ♖ed8 33 ♔f1 ♗c7 34 ♖e3 ♗b6 35 ♖f3 ♕c7 36 ♔g2 ♖d6 37 ♖h3 ♖8d7 38 g5 ♗a5 39 ♗b2 ♕d8 40 gxh6 gxh6 41 ♕e3 bxc4 42 bxc4 ♕b8 43 ♗a3 ♗b4 44 ♗c1 ♗c3 45 ♕e2 ♔g7 46 ♕c2 ♕b4 47 ♔h1 ♕a5 and now quite an impressive finish for a blitz game: 48 ♗xh6+! ♔xh6 49 ♕c1+ ♔g7 50 h6+ ♔h8 51 g7+ ♔h7 52 ♖g1 ♖d8 53 g8♕+! ♖xg8 54 ♖g7+! 1-0.

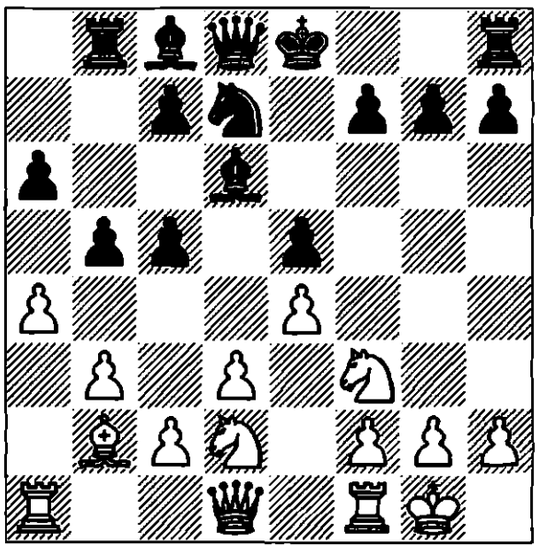
11 a4

White in turn tries to demonstrate that Black just weakened his queenside, and if nothing else will lose control over the a-file.

a) 11 g3 0-0 12 ♘h4 g6 13 ♕e1 ♕e7 14 f4 f6 ½-½ J.Horvath-Smejkal, Prague 1989.

b) 11 ♔h1 0-0 12 ♘g1 ♕h4!? 13 ♘e2 ♗b7 14 ♘f3 ♕e7 15 ♘g3 g6 16 ♕d2 f6 17 ♘g1 c4 18 bxc4 bxc4 19 d4 (19 dxc4 ♘b6 ∓) 19...exd4 20 ♗xd4 ♗xg3 21 hxg3 ♕xe4 ∓ Stripunsky-Golod, Oak Brook 2004.

11...♖b8 *(D)*



12 axb5

12 h3 0-0 13 ♘h2 ♖e8 14 ♘g4 ♘f8 15 ♘e3 ♘e6 16 g3 ♘d4 ∓ Borgo-Tatai, Reggio Emilia 1993/4.

12...axb5 13 c3

This move – combined with White's next – does not in our opinion address the requirements of the position. As we have mentioned earlier, the plan with d4 *can* be a good idea for White. However, this is mainly when White can use his lead in development (or more rarely: when Black has weakened his king position with ...f6). In this position, however, that is not the case; Black is fully mobilized and he will welcome d4 as it rids him of his slightly compromised pawn-structure and increases the scope of his bishops. Instead, White should keep his pawns on light squares to restrict the c8-bishop. A plan connected with f4 is much more positionally founded; this pawn advance springs naturally from the white pawn-chain. Hence, 13 g3! followed by ♘h4 and the slow preparation of f4 is a better solution.

13...0-0 14 d4 cxd4 15 cxd4 exd4 16 ♗xd4 c5 17 ♗b2 ♘b6 18 ♕e2 ♗e6 19 ♖a7 ♗f4

Black is slightly better.

Conclusion:

This line does not have much independent significance and leads to play of the generally same kind as in the previous section (Line 9B). We believe that Black is more than satisfactory here too.

Illustrative Game 34

J. Bellin – Hebden

Thessaloniki open 1988

20 ♖d1 ♕c8?

Instead, 20...♘c8! 21 ♖aa1 ♕e7 keeps all of Black's trumps.

21 g3 ♗h6 22 ♗e5 c4!?

Thanks to his careless 20th move, Black is suddenly experiencing some problems. The text-move is probably the best practical try. After 22...♖b7 23 ♖xb7 ♕xb7 24 ♕xb5 he is

just a pawn down with insufficient compensation.

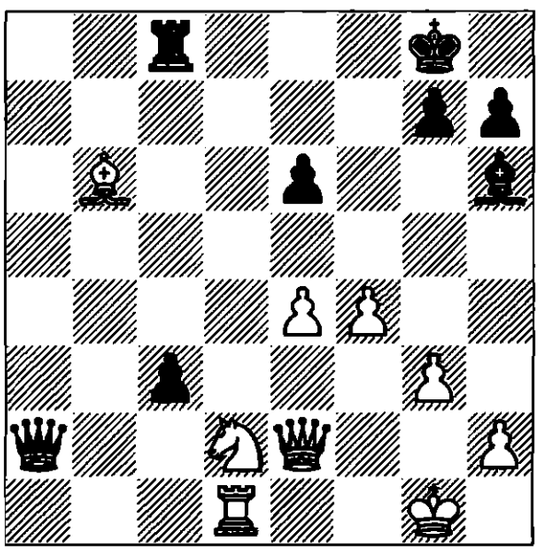
23 bxc4 bxc4 24 ♖c7

After 24 ♗xb8 ♕xb8, Black has some compensation but hardly enough.

24...♕a6 25 ♘d4 ♖bc8 26 ♘xe6 fxe6 27 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 28 ♗d4?

White is starting to drift and gradually loses the thread. The energetic 28 ♕g4! ♖e8 29 f4! would have left her firmly in the driving seat.

28...♕a2 29 ♗xb6 c3 30 f4 *(D)*



30...c2!

This is the move on which Black had pinned his hopes.

31 ♖c1 ♕b2

Half of White's army is under attack!

32 ♘b3

The only move that keeps the game going, but Black's strong passed pawn defines his clear advantage.

32...♕xb3 33 ♕a6 ♕c4?!

It looks more logical to keep the queens on, as White's kingside is seriously weakened. Hence: 33...♕c3! ∓.

34 ♕xc4 ♖xc4 35 ♔f2 g5 36 ♔e2?? 0-1

After the correct 36 ♔e3!, nothing is clear in this endgame. After the move in the game, 36...gxf4 duly decides matters so White resigned.

9D: Steenwijker, Rare 7th Moves

(1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖xc6 dxc6)

7 ♘c3

This move was quite popular in the 1970s, partly popularized by a booklet with the name *DERLD – Delayed Exchange Ruy Lopez Deferred* by Pickett.

a) 7 ♘xe5 ♘xe4 8 ♖e1 ♘f6 9 ♕e2 ♗e6 10 d3 ♘d7 11 ♘c3 ♘xe5 12 ♕xe5 0-0 = Lombardy-Van der Sterren, Amsterdam 1985.

b) 7 ♕e2 ♗g4 8 h3 ♗h5 and now:

b1) 9 d3 ♘d7 10 ♗e3 0-0 11 ♘bd2 ♖e8 12 ♖fe1 ♗f8 = G.Hernandez-Fernandez Garcia, Zaragoza 1996.

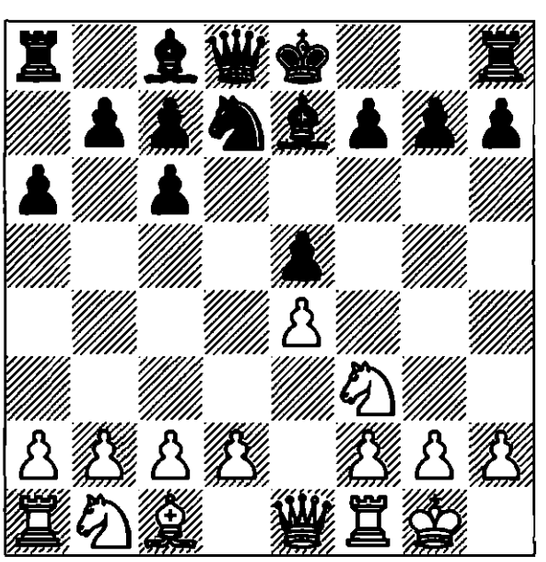
b2) 9 g4 ♗g6 10 ♘xe5 ♗xe4 (10...♕d4!? 11 ♘xg6 hxg6 is a safe option, when Black is at least not worse) 11 g5 ♖g8 12 ♔h2 (12 ♘c3 ♗f5 13 ♖e1 ♘d7 ∓ S.B.Hansen-Hector, Reykjavik 1995) 12...♗xc2 13 gxf6 gxf6 with good compensation.

c) 7 ♖e1 ♗g4 8 h3 ♗h5 and now:

c1) 9 d3 ♘d7 10 ♘bd2 f6 11 ♘f1 ♘c5 12 ♘g3 (Savon-Furman, Riga 1975) 12...♗f7!, followed by a quick ...♘e6, gives Black good play.

c2) 9 g4 ♗g6 (9...♘xg4!? 10 hxg4 ♗xg4 is similar to the main line and has scored well for Black) 10 ♘xe5 ♗xe4 11 g5 ♖g8 12 ♘g4 (12 gxf6? gxf6+ 13 ♘g4 f5 14 ♔f1 ♕d6 15 ♘c3 ♗h1 ∓ Wittman-Malinen, corr. Ech 1989-90) 12...♗d5! 13 gxf6 gxf6 14 ♔f1 ♗e6 gives Black the initiative.

d) The somewhat peculiar-looking 7 ♕e1!? is a serious option. White prevents the pin and may be looking to play d4 in one move. After 7...♘d7 *(D)* the main options are:



d1) White's most characteristic move is 8 d4, but after 8...exd4 9 ♘xd4 0-0 10 ♘c3 ♗f6, Black develops comfortably; e.g., 11 ♗e3 ♘e5 12 ♖d1 ♕e8 13 ♕e2 b6 14 h3 a5 15 f4 ♗a6 16 ♕f2 ♘g6 = Martin del Campo-Sisniega, Linares 1993.

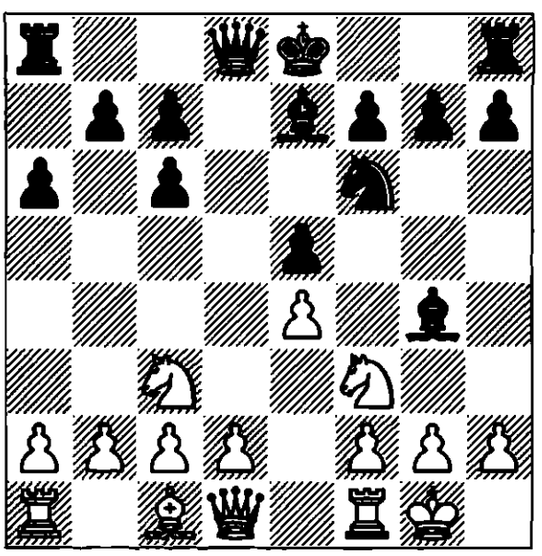
d2) After 8 b3 c5 9 ♗b2 ♗d6, White must soon decide which knight he wants to install at c4:

d21) 10 d3 0-0 11 ♘bd2 f6 12 ♘c4 ♘b8 13 a4 b6 14 ♘h4 ♘c6 15 ♘f5 ♗xf5 16 exf5 ♕d7 17 ♕e4 ♘e7 18 ♘e3 ♕c6 19 ♖fe1 ♕xe4 20 dxe4 ♘c6 21 f3 ♖fd8 ± Shabalov-Kamsky, New York 2005.

d22) 10 a4 ♕e7 11 ♘c3 ♘f6 12 d3 ♗e6 13 ♘d2 g5!? 14 ♘c4 0-0-0 15 ♗a3 ♘d7 16 ♖b1 ♘b8 17 ♘d5 ± Kramnik-Shirov, Dos Hermanas 1996.

7...♗g4 *(D)*

This is the logical way to take advantage of White's early castling and inability to support the f3-knight with a colleague on d2. There is nothing wrong with 7...♘d7, but 8 d4 gives White some piece activity.



8 h3

8 ♕e2 0-0 9 ♘d1 c5 10 ♘e3 ♗h5 11 d3 ♘d7 12 ♗d2 ♖e8 13 ♗c3 ♗g5 14 h3 ♗f4 15 g4 ♗g6 16 ♘g2 ♘f8 17 ♘xf4 exf4 18 ♕d2 ♘e6 19 ♔g2 c4 20 ♖ad1 cxd3 21 cxd3 c5 ∓ Adams-Anand, Brussels 1992.

8...♗h5 9 g4!?

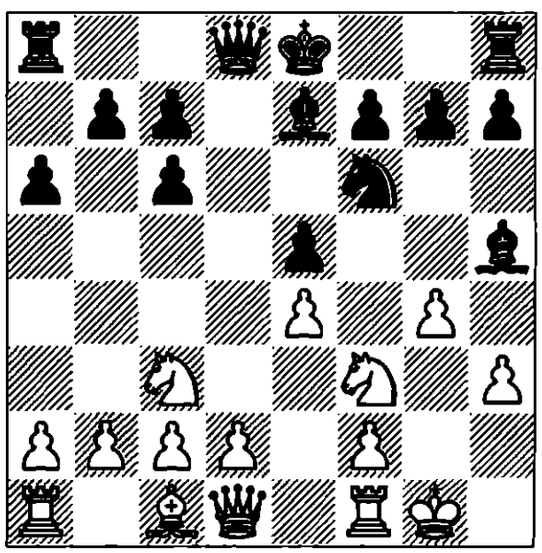
This isn't quite as forcing as it may appear. After the alternative 9 ♕e2 ♘d7, White can try:

a) 10 ♘d1 ♘c5 11 d3 ♘e6 12 g4 ♗g6 13 ♗e3 ♗d6 14 ♕d2 h5 ∓ Kremenietsky-Balashov, Moscow 1982.

b) 10 g4 ♗g6 11 d4 exd4 12 ♘xd4 h5 13 ♗f4 (13 ♘f5 hxg4 14 hxg4 ♗d6 15 f4 ♗xf5 16 exf5+ ♔f8 17 g5 ♘c5 (17...♕e8 =) 18 b4 ♕d7 19 bxc5 ♗xc5+ 20 ♗e3 ♕xf5 21 ♘e4 ♗xe3+ 22 ♕xe3 ♕h7 ∓ Sax-Ivkov, Rio de Janeiro IZ 1979) 13...hxg4 14 hxg4 ♗d6 ∓ Adams-Short, English Ch (London) 1991.

c) 10 d3 f6 11 ♗e3 ♘f8 12 ♖ad1 c5 13 ♘d5 ♗d6 14 b4 cxb4 15 d4 ♘d7 16 g4 ♗f7 17 dxe5 ♘xe5 18 ♘h4 0-0 19 ♘f5 ♗xd5 20 ♖xd5 ♕e8 ∓ Kholmov-Gligorić, Leningrad 1957.

We now return to 9 g4 *(D)*:



9...♘xg4!?

This typical sacrifice is very interesting, but not forced, as 9...♗g6 10 ♘xe5 (10 ♕e2 ♘d7 – *9 ♕e2 ♘d7 10 g4 ♗g6*) 10...♘xe4 also looks satisfactory:

a) 11 ♘xg6 ♘xc3 12 dxc3 hxg6 13 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 14 ♔g2 was dead even in Matulović-Spassky, USSR-Yugoslavia 1965.

b) 11 ♖e1 ♘xc3 12 bxc3 0-0 13 ♖b1 is supposed to be difficult for Black but we don't agree:

b1) Black should avoid 13...♖b8? 14 ♘xc6! bxc6 15 ♖xb8 ♕xb8 16 ♖xe7 with a large advantage for White.

b2) 13...♖a7!?, planning ...♗d6 and ...♕h4 seems fully playable. Wade and Harding claim that 14 ♕e2 is unpalatable for Black, but while 14...♗xc2?! 15 ♖b2 ♗a4 16 ♕e4 is indeed troublesome, we see nothing wrong with 14...♗d6.

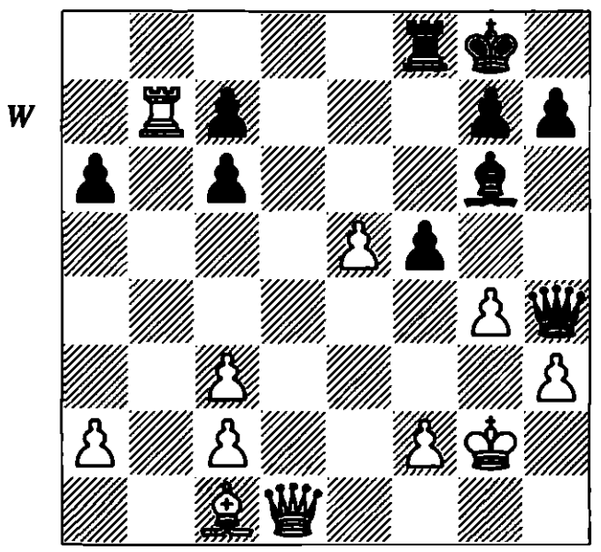
b3) We like 13...♗d6 14 ♖xb7 (after 14 f4 ♕h4 15 ♖e3 ♗xe5 16 fxe5 b6, Black has excellent chances due to the opposite-coloured bishops and White's weakened kingside) 14...♕h4, when White can try:

b31) 15 ♕f3? ♖ae8 ∓.

b32) After 15 d3 Wade and Harding give 15...♕xh3 16 ♗g5 ♗xe5 17 ♖xe5 ♖fe8 as unclear. We suspect that Black should not allow himself to be distracted by the pawn on h3, and

try the direct 15...f5 with a strong kingside initiative.

b33) 15 ♔g2 and now rather than the 15...f5 of Hackett-Lane, British Ch (Torquay) 1982, it seems that 15...♖ae8 16 d4 (or 16 ♘f3 ♕f6) 16...♗xe5 17 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 18 dxe5 f5! *(D)* gives Black at least compensation:



b331) 19 g5 ♗h5 20 ♕e1 f4 21 ♔h2 ♗g4 22 ♕f1 ♗e6 and Black keeps his strong initiative.

b332) 19 exf6 ♕xf6 20 ♕e2 ♗e4+ 21 ♔g1 ♗f3 22 ♕e3 ♕h4 with a strong attack for Black, accentuated by the presence of opposite-coloured bishops.

b333) 19 ♗e3 ♗f7! 20 ♖b4 ♗d5+ 21 ♔h2 fxg4 22 ♖xg4 ♖xf2+ 23 ♔g1 ♖g2+ 24 ♖xg2 ♕xh3 25 ♕d2 ♗xg2 26 ♕d8+ ♔f7 27 ♕xc7+, when a draw is the likely outcome.

10 hxg4 ♗xg4 11 ♔g2

11 ♕e2 ♕d6 also seems fine for Black: 12 ♕e3 ♗h3 13 ♘h4 ♗xf1 14 ♘f5 ♕f6 15 ♔xf1 ♗b4 16 d3 g6 17 ♘h6 (Davies suggests that 17 ♗d2!?, allowing White to meet ...0-0-0 with ♕a7, could be an improvement) 17...♕e6 18 ♕f3 ♖f8 19 ♗d2 0-0-0 20 ♖e1 f5 ∓ Conquest-Stefansson, Hafnarfirdi 1992.

11...♕d6 12 ♖g1

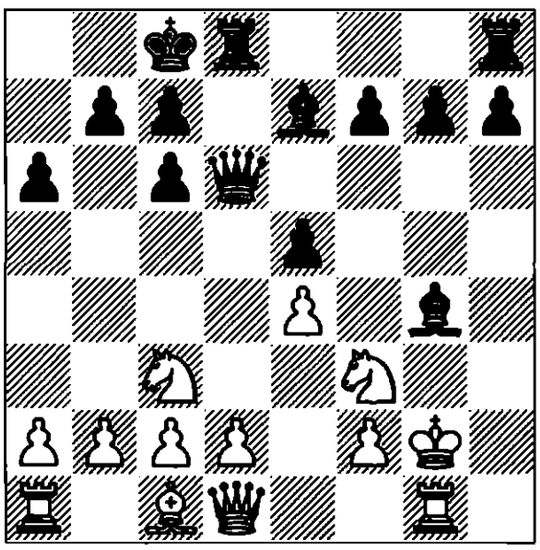
Or:

a) The unpinning 12 ♕e1 is not of theoretical interest as it allows Black to secure a draw with 12...♗xf3+ 13 ♔xf3 ♕f6+. From a more practical viewpoint it is also satisfactory for Black, who has several ways to keep the fight going.

b) 12 ♘e2 makes sense, and is quite likely to transpose after 12...0-0-0.

c) After 12 ♖h1 h5, the only certain thing is that Black has sufficient practical compensation: 13 ♕g1 ♕f6 14 ♘e1 h4 15 d3 ♗e6 16 ♗e3 g5 17 ♔f1 g4 with a strong initiative for Black.

12...0-0-0 *(D)*



This is not Black's only move, but is a natural way to continue the attack. The position is unbalanced, but both players have a lot of freedom in how to improve their position. In practical terms, Black has compensation. White needs to complete a major reorganization of his kingside. In the meantime Black's kingside pawns will be rolling. We would also like to point out that in spite of having only two pawns for the piece at the moment, all the computers substantially prefer Black. His compensation is long-term and we believe few players would be comfortable confronting Black's lasting initiative in a practical game.

13 ♘e2 h5 14 ♘h2 ♗e6 15 d3 g6 16 ♔h1 c5 17 b3 ♖hg8 18 ♕e1 ♕c6 19 f3 ♔b8 20 ♗d2 ♖df8 21 ♗h6 ♖e8 22 ♕d2 f6 23 ♗e3 g5

Black has compensation.

Conclusion:

The sacrifice on g4 – even though not obligatory – is intriguing and secures Black excellent chances.

Illustrative Game 35

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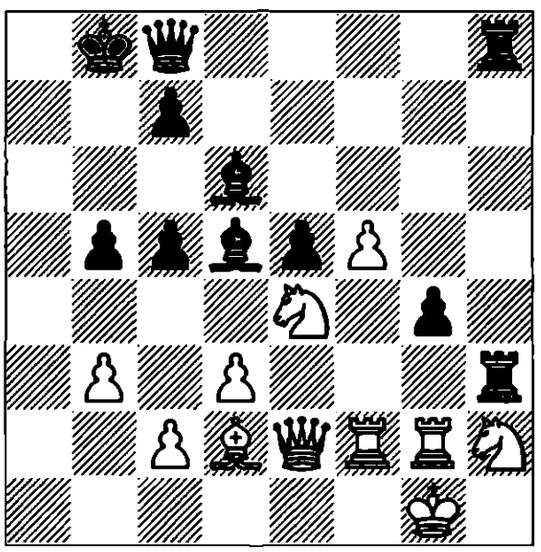
24 ♖af1 ♖h8 25 ♘g3 ♖eg8 26 ♕e1 ♕d7 27 ♗d2 ♗d8

The direct 27...h4!? is also interesting.

28 ♖f2 ♖h7 29 a4 ♖gh8 30 ♕e3 ♗e7 31 ♕e2 b6 32 ♗c1 ♗d6 33 ♗d2 ♕c8 34 ♔g2 b5?!

This initiates a risky plan. 34...♗h3+ 35 ♔h1 ♗e6 could well have led to a repetition.

35 axb5 axb5 36 ♔h1 g4 37 fxg4 hxg4 38 ♖gg2 ♖h3 39 ♔g1 f5 40 exf5 ♗d5 41 ♘e4 *(D)*



It now appears that White has defended successfully.

41...♗xe4 42 dxe4 c4

There is no time for 42...g3 because the b5-pawn hangs with check.

43 ♗e3?

43 ♖xg4 ♗c5 44 ♘f3 was a better way to return material for the sake of king safety.

43...g3 44 ♖f3 ♕g8?!

After the natural 44...♖xh2 45 ♖fxg3 ♖h1+ 46 ♔f2 ♗e7! 47 ♗g5 ♗xg5 48 ♖xg5 ♕d8 49 bxc4 ♖1h3! White's king is under heavy fire.

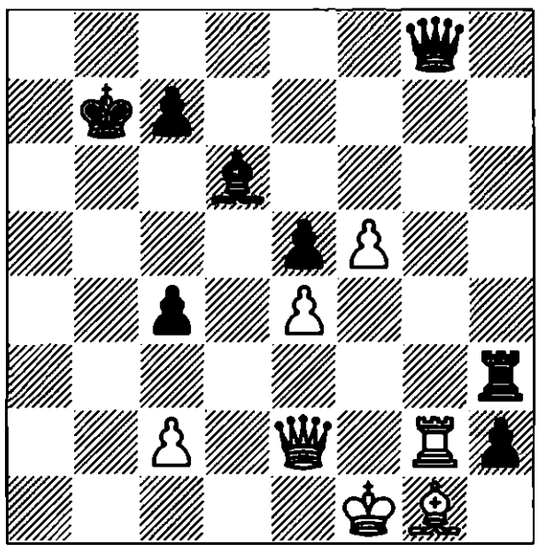
45 ♔f1 ♔b7

Now it's too late for 45...♖xh2: 46 ♖fxg3 ♖h1+ 47 ♗g1 and White defends.

46 bxc4 bxc4?

46...gxh2! looks like a draw: 47 ♖xh3 ♖xh3 48 ♖xh2 ♖xh2 49 ♕xh2 ♕xc4+.

47 ♗g1 gxh2 48 ♖xh3 ♖xh3 *(D)*



49 ♖xg8 h1♕ 50 ♖g2?

Now the errors start coming thick and fast, so we assume that this was a time-scramble. 50 ♕xc4 ♕f3+ (or 50...♖f3+? 51 ♔e2) 51 ♔e1 and Black has run out of checks already, leaving White with a winning attack.

50...♖a3?

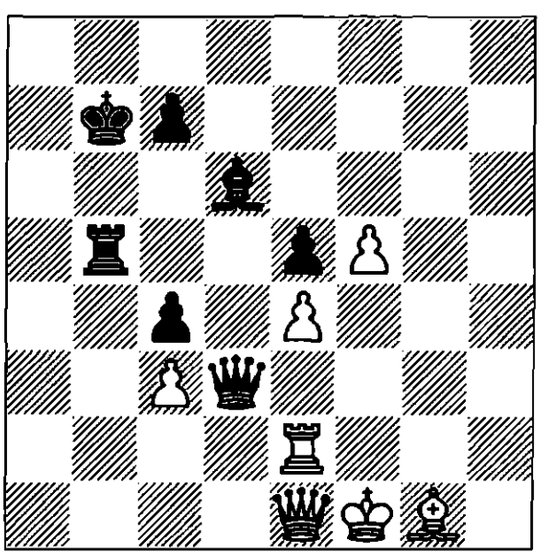
This is the wrong move-order! After 50...♗c5 White is completely tied up.

51 ♕d1 ♖a5 52 c3 ♕h3 53 ♕e1

53 ♗f2 is probably a better defensive try.

53...♕d3+ 54 ♖e2 ♖b5? *(D)*

This threatens ...♖b1, but gives White a breathing space. The natural 54...♖a2 wins immediately: 55 ♗e3 (Black threatens a lethal check on h3 and 55 ♗f2 is met by 55...♖b2! with ...♖b1 coming next) 55...♗e7 56 ♗f2 ♗g5 57 f6 ♗f4 and White is completely helpless against the threat of ...♕h3+.



55 ♕f2?

55 ♔g2! would have kept the game going, but Black is probably winning anyway; e.g., 55...♖b1 56 ♕d2 ♖c1 57 ♕xd3 cxd3 58 ♖b2+ ♔c6 59 ♗e3 ♖xc3 60 ♔f3 ♗a3 61 ♖h2 ♔b5 followed by advancing Black's passed pawns.

55...♕h3+ 56 ♕g2 ♖b1+ 0-1

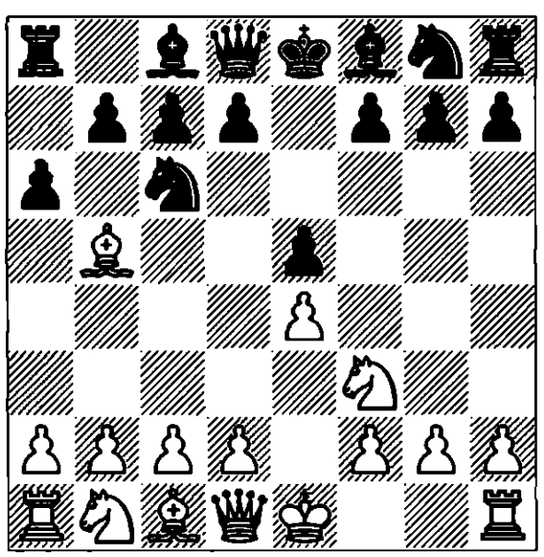
57 ♔f2 ♗c5+ mates.

Index of Variations

Note: when moves appear in brackets, this indicates that less significant alternatives are also considered in the same section or chapter. Numbers refer to pages.

Chapter Guide

1 e4 e5
2 ♘f3 ♘c6
3 ♗b5 a6



4 ♗a4

4 ♗xc6 – Chapter 8

4 ... ♘f6
5 0-0

5 ♗xc6 – Chapter 9
5 ♕e2 – Chapter 7
5 d4 – Chapter 7
5 ♘c3 – Chapter 7
5 d3 – Chapter 7

5 ... ♗e7
6 ♖e1

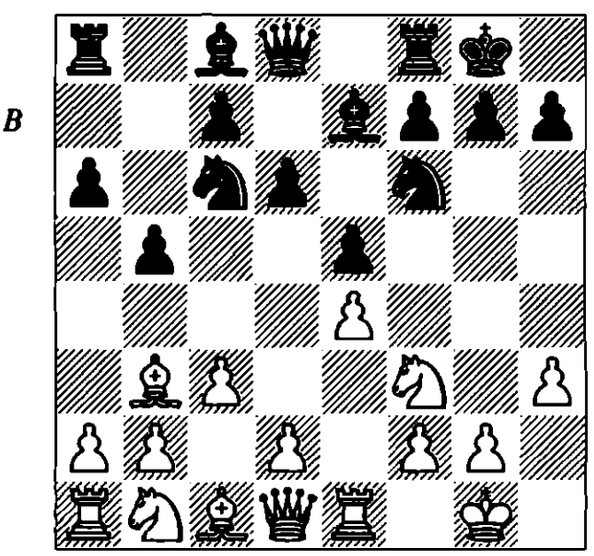
6 ♗xc6 – Chapter 9
6 ♕e2 – Chapter 7
6 d4 – Chapter 7
6 ♘c3 – Chapter 7
6 d3 – Chapter 7

6 ... b5
7 ♗b3 d6
8 c3

8 a4 and other moves – Chapter 6

8 ... 0-0
9 h3

9 d4 – Chapter 6
Other moves – Chapter 6



9 ... ♗b7

9...♖e8 (including 10 d4 ♗f8) – Chapter 4
9...♕d7 – Chapter 5

10 d4

Other moves – Chapter 3

10 ... ♖e8

10...♕d7 – Chapter 4

11 ♘bd2

11 ♘g5 – Chapter 4
Other moves – Chapter 3

11 ... ♗f8
12 a4

Other moves – Chapter 3

12 ... h6

Alternatives at this point and up to move 17 – Chapter 1

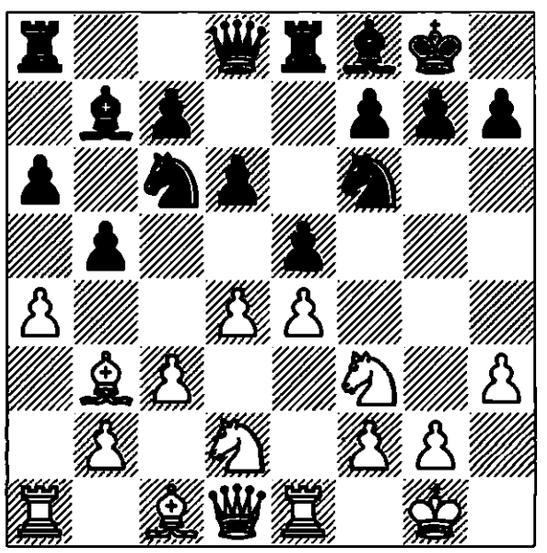
13 ♗c2 exd4
14 cxd4 ♘b4
15 ♗b1 c5
16 d5 ♘d7
17 ♖a3

Now:
17...f5 – Chapter 1
17...c4 – Chapter 2

1 The Zaitsev Main Line

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4

B



(12...h6 13 ♗c2 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 ♘d7 17 ♖a3 f5 18 ♘h2 ♘f6)

Line 1A: 19 ♖f3 *54*
Line 1B: 19 ♖g3 *60*
Line 1C: (19 g4?!) *62*
Line 1D: 18 ♖ae3 *64*
Line 1E: (18 exf5) *68*
Line 1F: 13 ♗c2 (13...exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 ♘d7 17 ♘f1?!) *73*
Line 1G: (12...h6 13 d5) *77*

2 The 17...c4 Zaitsev

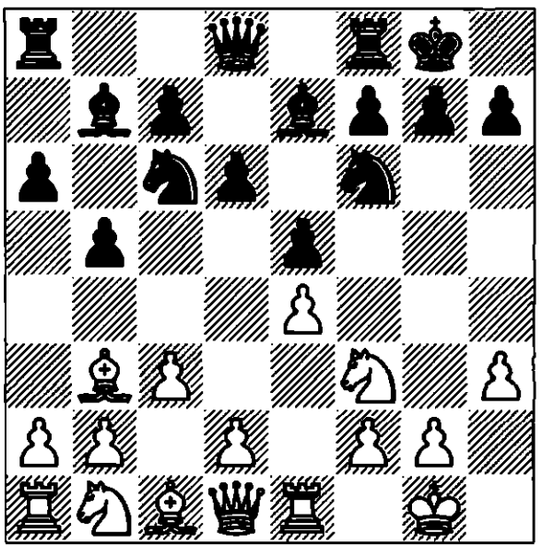
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 a4 h6 13 ♗c2 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 c5 16 d5 ♘d7 17 ♖a3 c4

Line 2A: 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♘d4 *83*
Line 2B: (18 ♘d4) *87*

3 Other Zaitsev Lines

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7

W



(10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8)

Line 3A: 12 d5 *91*
Line 3B: 12 a3 *95*
Line 3C: (12 ♗c2) *100*
Line 3D: (10 d4 ♖e8 11 a4!?) *104*

4 Imperfection

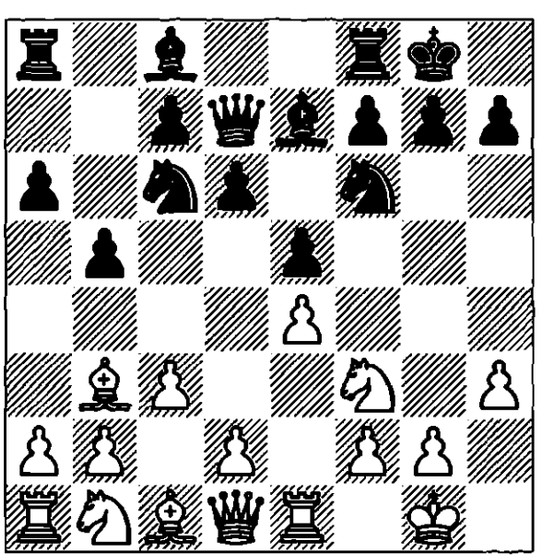
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 (9...♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8)

Line 4A: 11 ♘g5 ♖f8 (12 f4!?) *109*
Line 4B: 11 ♘g5 ♖f8 12 ♕d3!? *111*
Line 4C: 10...♕d7 *112*
Line 4D: 9...♖e8 (10 d4 ♗f8!?) *114*

5 Regrouping System

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♕d7

W



(10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8)

Line 5A: 12 d5 *119*
Line 5B: 12 ♗c2 *122*
Line 5C: (12 a3) *124*
Line 5D: 11 ♗g5!? *126*
Line 5E: (10 d4 ♖e8 11 a4) *130*

6 Rare 8th and 9th Moves

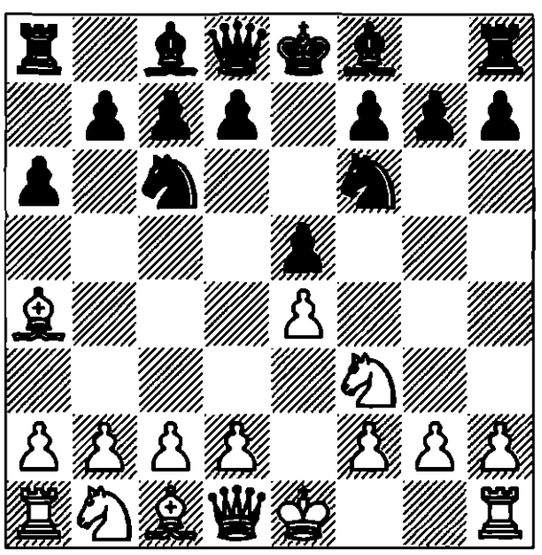
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 (8 c3 0-0 9 d4 ♗g4 10 ♗e3 exd4 11 cxd4 d5 12 e5 ♘e4)

Line 6A: 13 h3 *134*
Line 6B: (13 ♘c3) *137*
Line 6C: 10 d5 *138*
Line 6D: (10 a4!?) *141*
Line 6E: 9 d3 *143*
Line 6F: (9 a4) *148*
Line 6G: (8 a4) *151*

7 5th and 6th Move Alternatives

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6

W

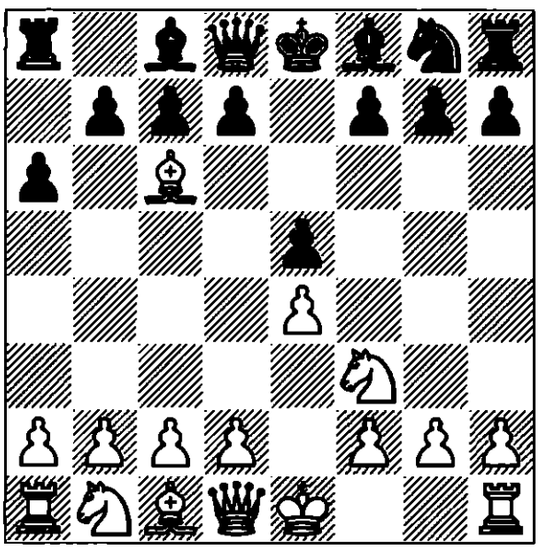


Line 7A: 5 ♕e2 (5...b5 6 ♗b3 ♗e7) 7 0-0 *158*
Line 7B: 5 ♕e2 b5 6 ♗b3 ♗e7 7 a4!? *162*
Line 7C: 5 ♕e2 b5 6 ♗b3 ♗e7 (7 c3) *164*
Line 7D: 5 d4!? *166*
Line 7E: 5 ♘c3 *169*
Line 7F: 5 d3 *170*

8 The Exchange Variation

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗xc6

B



(4...dxc6 5 0-0 f6 6 d4 exd4 7 ♘xd4 c5)

Line 8A: 8 ♘b3 *178*
Line 8B: 8 ♘e2 *181*
Line 8C: (6 d4 exd4 7 ♕xd4) *184*
Line 8D: 5...♘e7!? *185*
Line 8E: 5 d4 *189*
Line 8F: (5 ♘c3) *191*

9 Delayed Exchange Variations

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 (5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♗xc6 dxc6 7 d3 ♘d7)

Line 9A: 5 ♗xc6 *194*
Line 9B: 8 ♘bd2 *196*
Line 9C: (8 b3) *199*
Line 9D: (7 ♘c3) *200*

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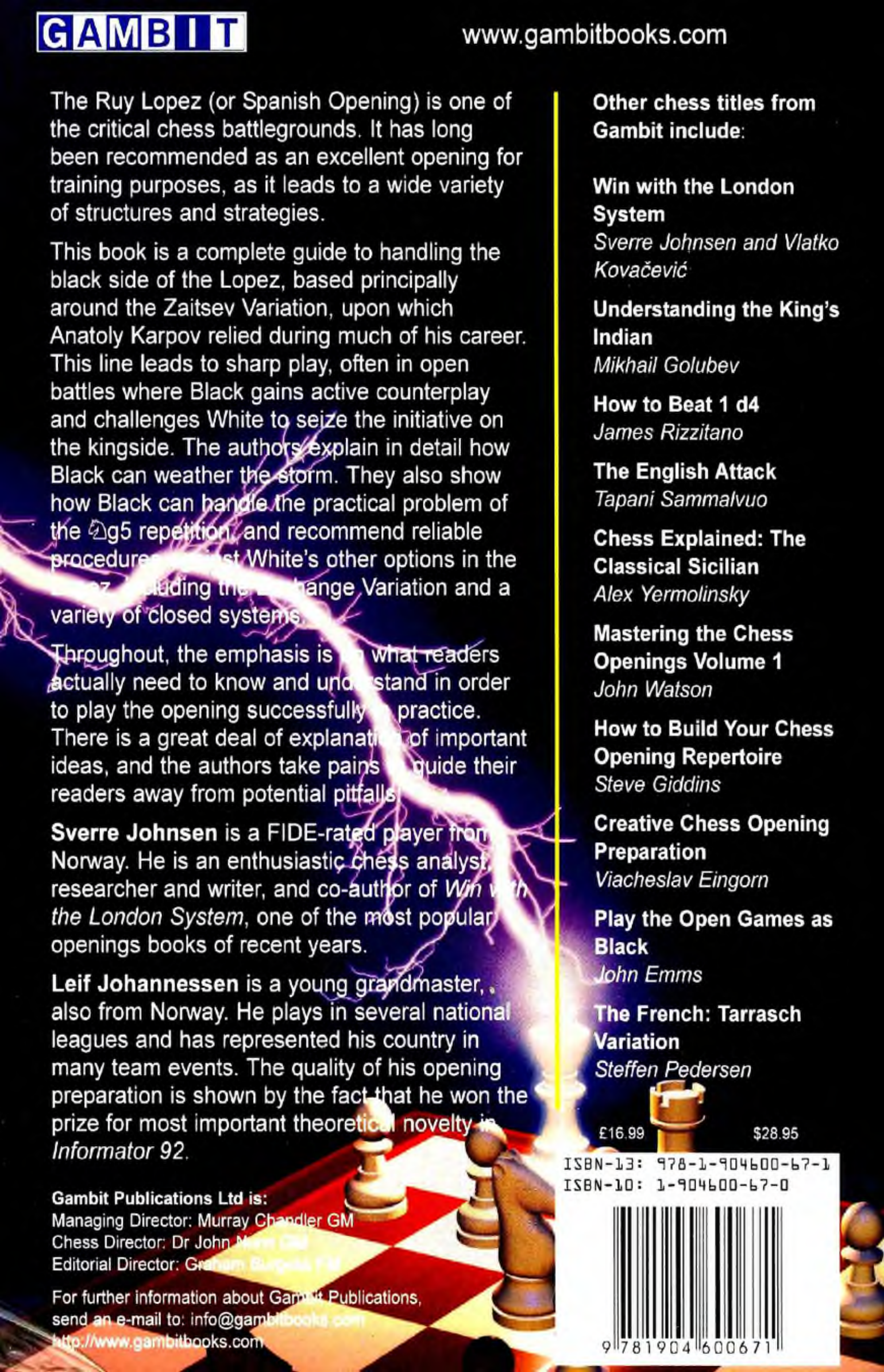

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